

**NORTHERN JOURNEYS**  
**A HISTORIAN'S NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**David Carment**

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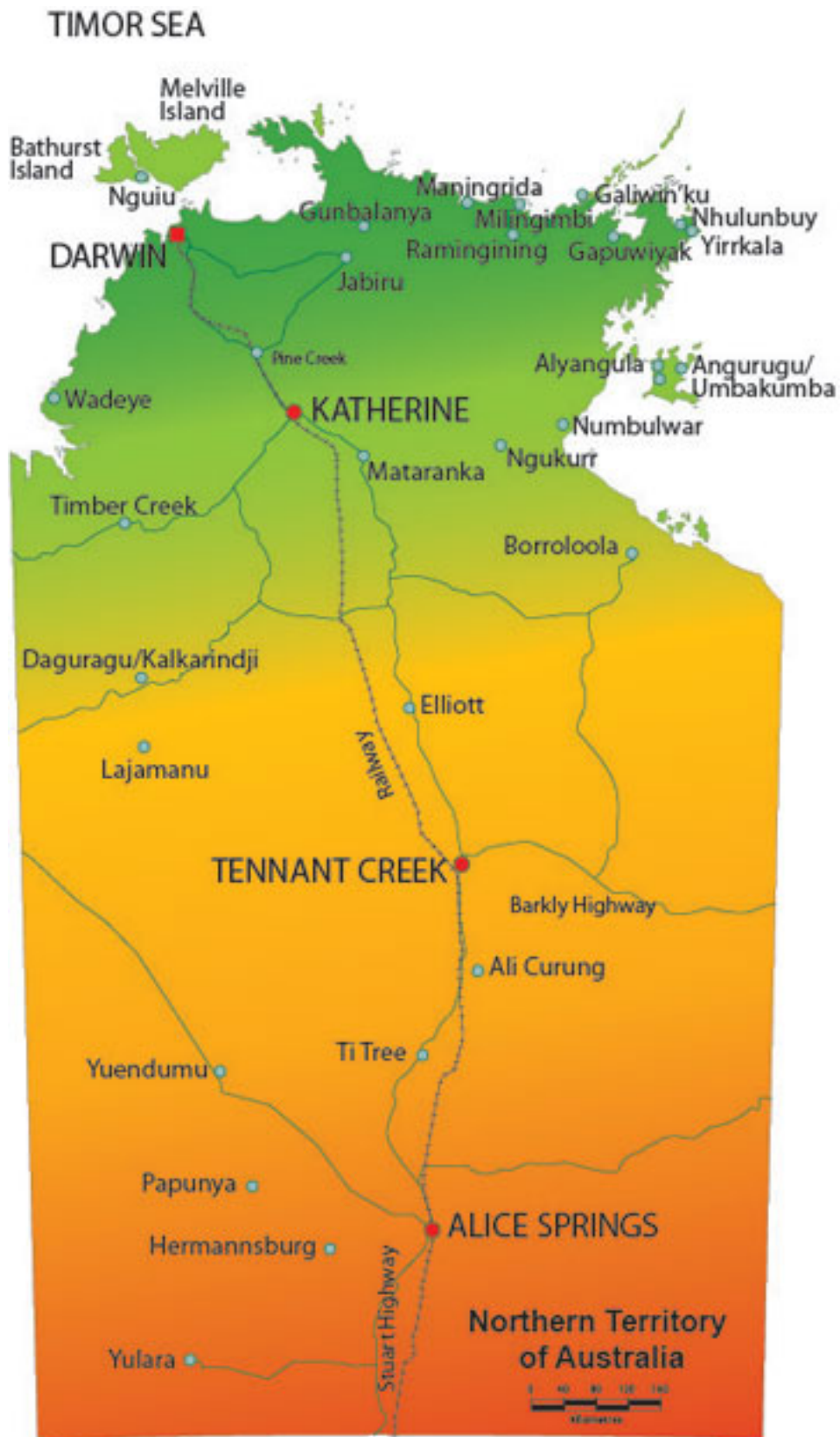
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**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this book includes some images of deceased persons.**



(Northern Territory Government)

## PREFACE

This memoir is about my journeys in space, thought and time as a historian in and of Australia's Northern Territory, where I lived from November 1981 until March 2006 and to which I quite frequently return. Although I sometimes found the Territory challenging, it provided me with opportunities and interests that would not have existed elsewhere. Its residents' life styles and their social and political attitudes provided rich subjects for historical analysis. Even when raw and confronting they remained almost compulsively fascinating.

I mainly wrote the memoir for my own enjoyment. Having, however, encouraged other people to make records of their Territory experiences publicly available I felt I should do the same. The memoir is published on my website <http://www.dcarment.com> with a small number of copies being printed, mainly for libraries.

I sent letters, first by post and later by email, to my parents living in Sydney almost every week that we were apart. These, which my father carefully filed, combined with my photograph albums, various publications, reports, oral communications, other materials, and memories are the basis of the account that follows. Susan Marsden's 2004 interview with me for the National Library of Australia provided the initial inspiration to write such an account.<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of sections in Chapters One and Two was published in *Territory in Trust* magazine during 2007.<sup>2</sup>

The memoir is a highly selective account of my experiences and impressions as a Northern Territory historian that makes no attempt at being completely comprehensive. Limited attention is given to what I did outside the Territory and my personal life. I try, though, to say enough regarding these, especially my term as the Australian Historical Association's President, to put my Territory historian's role in an appropriate context. Descriptions of my travels in the Territory are prominent as they significantly shaped my historical perspectives.

The Northern Territory has approximately 233,000 people. It is the least populated of Australia's self-governing states and territories apart from Norfolk Island. On the other hand,

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<sup>1</sup> The letters are now in my possession. There are a few gaps, the longest being for late 2005. The two digital tapes and transcript of Susan Marsden's interview are in the National Library of Australia, Canberra. The only sources footnoted in this book are for direct quotations. Unless otherwise indicated, I own all images.

<sup>2</sup> David Carment, 'Northern Journeys: 1981-1983', in *Territory in Trust*, vol 24, no 2, 2007.

the Northern Territory covers 1,346,200 square kilometers, occupying about one fifth of Australia's landmass. The low population density is largely due to climatic extremes, particularly the high heat for at least half of each year, and a failure to develop full economic sustainability. Much of the work force is, as it was when I lived there, young, mobile and transient. This poses considerable challenges in creating and maintaining a strong sense of local identity among non-Indigenous residents although successive Territory governments have strenuously attempted to do so. About a third of the population is Indigenous. Many of the Territory's Indigenous inhabitants live on their traditional lands in remote locations. The major urban centres are the capital Darwin, with (for Greater Darwin) about 136,000 people, and Alice Springs with about 28,000. Leading industries are construction, fishing, mining, agriculture, pastoralism and tourism. Territory government budgets still greatly depend on Commonwealth financial assistance. The Territory became self-governing in 1978. A 1998 referendum in the Territory rejected a proposal that it be a state.

Despite and in some respects because of its small population, fragile economy and failure to achieve statehood, the Territory's history attracts quite widespread interest among historians and in the broader Australian community. Major historical themes include an Aboriginal occupation of more than 40,000 years, contacts between Aborigines and Asians, the first British settlements, European exploration, transport and communications, agriculture and pastoralism, race relations, war, and urbanisation. Alan Powell, the Territory's premier historian, in identifying the 'heritage of Territorians' finds it 'in isolation from the rest of the continent, nearness to Asia, war experience, location in the tropics, and the powerful influence of Aborigines...Above all it is the long colonial experience that sets them most apart'.<sup>3</sup>

This heritage was my continuing pre-occupation during the quarter of a century I was in the Territory.

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<sup>3</sup>Alan Powell, 'Northern Territory', in Graeme Aplin, S.G. Foster & Michael McKernan (eds), *Australians: A Historical Dictionary*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1987, p 303.

## CHAPTER ONE

### BEGINNINGS 1894-1981

The Northern Territory is part of my family's history and my own early recollections.

In early 1894 my Scottish-born great grandfather David Carment with his wife and two children began a journey around the world from Sydney, where he had lived for over 20 years. On 23 March 1894 the ship on which they were travelling, SS *Guthrie*, reached Darwin, then known as Palmerston and the centre of the Northern Territory's South Australian administration. The Commonwealth of Australia did not assume responsibility for the Territory until 1911. His diary entry provides a portrait of the small town.

*The heat here was very great and we were advised not to go ashore until pretty late in the afternoon. The town is prettily situated on the top of a slight eminence which slopes steeply down to a sort of semi-circular bay and which is well clothed with green vegetation. We walked first through Chinatown, a long and wide street entirely occupied by Chinese shopkeepers, who were all seen diligently at work at laundrying, tailoring, carpentering etc, a good many of the men being naked above the waist while at work. The Europeans nearly all dress in white. The aboriginal of both sexes are generally also completely naked above the waist, many of the children completely so. They all smoke clay pipes...The town is well laid out, with straight and wide streets along the sides of which buildings are planted. The buildings are nearly all of galvanised iron, except the large stone ones belonging to the Government Resident and to the Telegraph and Cable Company...after dinner we set forth again to see a corroboree...The men were hideously painted for the occasion with broad stripes of white and red in various patterns with extraordinary headdresses. Some of the women and children also took part...the performance...consisted mainly of stamping violently on the ground and advancing and retreating alternately...After rather over an hour of this sort of thing we began to get tired of it and made our way back to the ship. The heat in the cabins was intolerable.<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> David Carment, 'Diary of a Journey Round the World, 9<sup>th</sup> March 1894 to 27<sup>th</sup>. January 1895', unpublished manuscript in the author's possession, entry for 23 March 1894.



**Unidentified woman and man sitting on the deck of SS *Guthrie* in about 1890 (The University of Queensland Library)**

My next close relation to visit Darwin did not do so until 1946. My maternal grandfather Tom Sulman was a flight engineer on the first civilian aircraft to reach Australia from Britain following the Second World War. A privately owned former Royal Air Force Halifax bomber converted to carry passengers and renamed *Waltzing Matilda*, it landed at Darwin on 11 June 1946. The flight attracted considerable media attention. Although an Australian, Sulman had lived in Britain for many years. One of the first things he did after landing was to join other crewmembers in a meal at one of the town's Chinese cafes. They all had steak, eggs and banana splits. 'After the severe rationing in England', Sulman later

recalled, they ‘just could not believe it’.<sup>5</sup> Sulman was in the Northern Territory again as a participant in two of the Redex car trials during the early 1950s. His brother Arthur and sister in law Ann also went to the Territory in the mid 1950s, returning with a painting by the prominent Aboriginal artist Albert Namatjira.



### *Waltzing Matilda in 1946*

My father Maxwell Carment was a chartered accountant and company director. His boards included the pastoral company Retreat Holdings, which in 1960 purchased the lease of Roper Valley, a huge cattle station in the east of the Territory’s ‘Top End’. Before the purchase occurred, my father and Retreat Holdings’ Chairman Tim Whitney made an inspection of the property. Dad later recalled his impressions. Roper Valley was

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<sup>5</sup> Tom Sulman & David Carment, ‘The Flight of “Waltzing Matilda”’, in *Journal of Northern Territory History*, no 19, 2008, p 89.

*almost completely unfenced...The Roper Valley Tribe lived on the station, the men were excellent horsemen and provided all the stockmen. The girls and unmarried women were employed on domestic tasks...The Aboriginal stockmen were paid very much less than white employees. No alcohol was permitted. Their living accommodation was extremely primitive...The cattle were shorthorns of poor quality as, without fences, it was impossible to control breeding. The country was absolutely beautiful.*<sup>6</sup>

Although Roper Valley only made small profits, Retreat Holdings went ahead with the purchase. When equal wages for Aboriginal pastoral workers were later introduced the station was sold. Dad made another trip to it before that occurred. On both visits he took colour photographs and movies, which as a child I found quite wonderful. Roper Valley was obviously an entirely different environment to that which I knew in Sydney.



**Stockmen at Roper Valley in 1962 photographed by Maxwell Carment**

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<sup>6</sup> D.M. Carment, 'Recollections', 1999, unpublished manuscript in the author's possession, pp 1-108 & 1-109.

Dad's second connection with Northern Territory occurred in 1965 when he was appointed an original director of the North Australian Bauxite and Alumina Company, known as Nabalco, formed to mine bauxite on the Territory's Gove Peninsula. Nabalco was a subsidiary of Swiss Aluminium, known as Alusuisse, whose Swiss headquarters he visited in 1965 to meet the executives responsible for the Gove venture. He resigned from his directorship in 1968 when the company was restructured. Probably in 1970, as a guest of Nabalco he visited the company's Gove bauxite and alumina plant during its construction and enjoyed some fishing in nearby Melville Bay.



**G.B. Lean (Chairman of Peko-Wallsend), Maxwell Carment and Sir Emmet McDermott (Lord Mayor of Sydney) fishing at Melville Bay in about 1970**

I was born at Sydney in 1949 into a middle class family of mainly Scottish ancestry. Educated at independent schools in Sydney, I became fascinated with History at a very early age in spite of the poor way in which it was sometimes taught and did much better in it than the other subjects I studied. Dad was an omnivorous reader of history books, of which he owned a large collection. His aunt Janetta Murray wrote two well-received textbooks on Scottish history. Almost all the many books that I read for pleasure were on historical topics. From my mother Diana, who trained as an architect, I developed a fascination with old buildings and their stories that she encouraged. She was justifiably proud of her paternal grandfather Sir John Sulman, a leading Australian architect and town planner. My parents were keen that my sister Annie, brother Tom and I saw as much of Australia as possible. We covered large parts of the country, mainly by road. We frequently visited historic places and museums. History appealed to me for its engaging stories of events, people and places and for helping to make sense of an often perplexing present. As an argumentative boy who sometimes annoyed adults by asking too many questions, I found it appealing that historians disagreed with one another.

I first encountered snippets of the Northern Territory's history at school. I read and quite enjoyed Mrs. Aeneas Gunn's *We of the Never Never*, based on her year at a Territory cattle station, as a set book during my final year of primary school. The Territory then seemed an exotic place that did not have a lot in common with the rest of Australia. I recall nothing at all about the Territory in any of the university subjects that I studied. I did, though, a little work on Territory history for my doctoral research on the federal politician Sir Littleton Groom. As Minister for External Affairs between 1909 and 1910, Groom unsuccessfully introduced legislation to transfer the Territory from South Australian to Commonwealth control. For various reasons this ran into difficulties. The transfer only occurred after another federal government was in power in 1911. Like most Australians, I was horrified by Cyclone Tracy's destructiveness in 1974. I thought at the time how fortunate I was not to live in a place that experienced cyclones.

It was not until after I left school that I realised that I might be employed as a historian. After receiving a History Honours degree from The University of New South Wales in 1972, I completed a doctorate in the same discipline from The Australian National University in 1975. I became a historian of Australia principally because I wanted to help make sense of the country in which I lived. Some of the historians whose writings most

influenced me during my undergraduate years were Australian specialists such as Geoffrey Blainey, Manning Clark and Russel Ward. I was fortunate to be taught Australian history by Bill Hudson, Bev Kingston and Heather Radi, all of whom were fine scholars with interesting approaches and ideas. I also studied modern European, American, East Asian, international and Irish history and benefited greatly by doing so. Patrick O'Farrell, who taught modern European and Irish history, helped make me aware of the vital roles of ideology and religion. Frank Crowley was a generous and stimulating supervisor of my Honours thesis in Australian history. He persuaded me to go to The Australian National University for my doctorate, where my supervisor was Australia's best-known historian Manning Clark. Between 1975 and 1981 I was employed as a historian at The University of Western Australia in Perth where I learned much about teaching from Marian Aveling (later Quartly), Brian de Garis, Lenore Layman, Tom Stannage and Brian Stoddart, and the Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education (now Central Queensland University) in Rockhampton, where I taught Australian and modern European history and undertook research on Australian federal political history and Central Queensland history.



**History Honours graduates with Frank Crowley at The University of New South in 1972: Christopher Carr, the author, Dennis Petrosian, Frank Crowley, David Deasey, Paul Dalby and Robin Walsh**



**The author at Canberra in 1975**

While at Rockhampton, I first developed a strong interest in Australian regional history and ways in which regional historians could interact with the wider community through interpreting the past's material evidence in the form of structures and objects. I became actively involved in the National Trust, serving as Chairman of its Rockhampton Branch. Convinced that History should be relevant to the local community, I felt it could achieve this without any sacrifice in standards. I encouraged my more able students to undertake projects on the Central Queensland region and completed my own published research on the history of Rockhampton Hospital, Aboriginal-European relations in the region during the mid nineteenth century, Rockhampton in 1888 and the lives of a few local figures. I was inspired by what was happening at James Cook University in Townsville, where under Brian Dalton's leadership there was a flowering of teaching, research and publications on North Queensland history.

By the early 1980s I knew that I would never be in the front rank of Australian historians. I was not a skilled writer, being envious of historians like Blainey who were. I

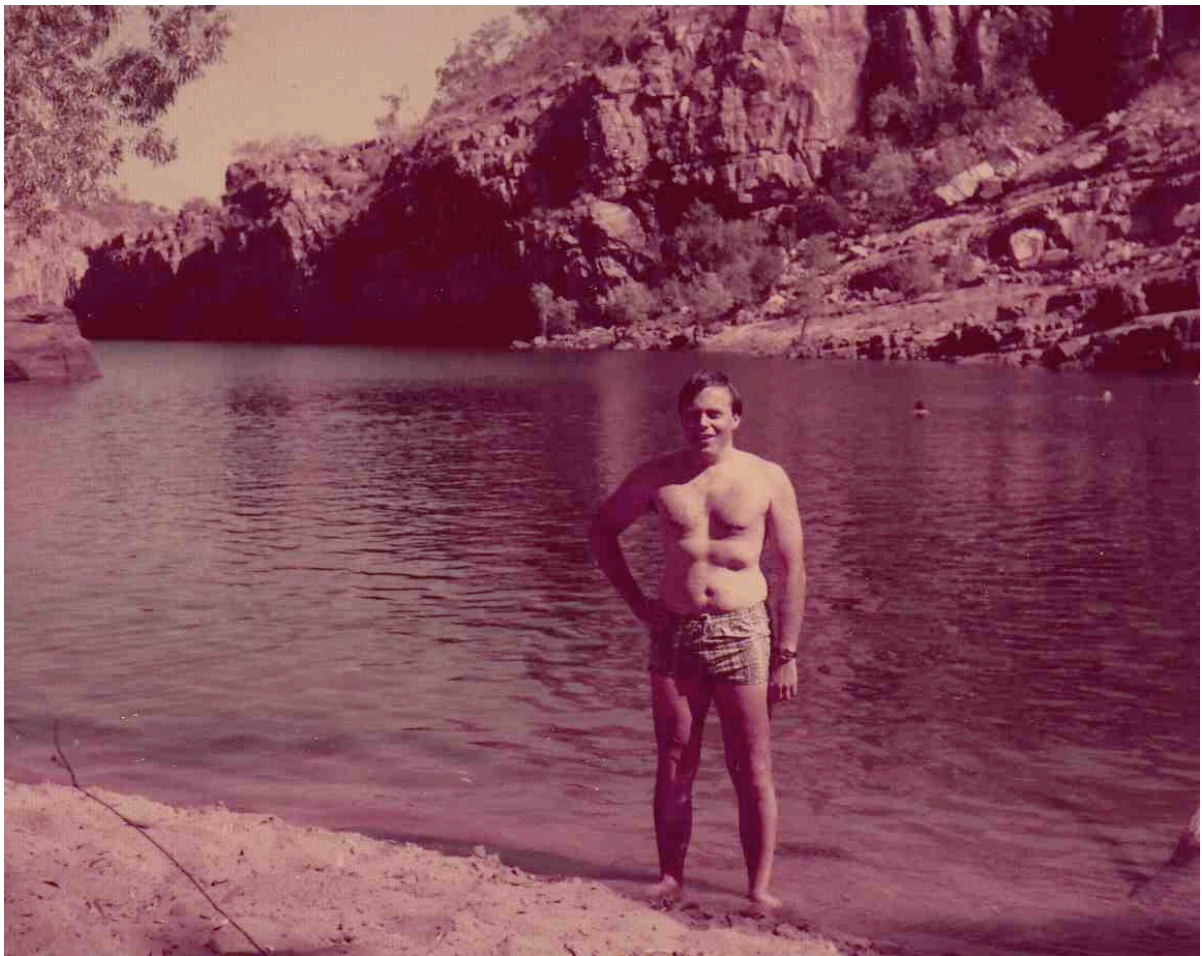
feared that I lacked both the ability and the application to author big and important books. I settled instead on approaches to historical research and writing that were not notably innovative but were within my limitations and where I might still say something of interest and value. Although quite interested in theory, I did not make extensive use of it. In spite of continuing admiration for the work of some Marxist authors, especially the British historians Eric Hobsbawm, George Rudé and E.P. Thompson, I rejected most Marxist approaches, which I found did not accord with my own historical perspectives. My political and social opinions, which moved during the 1970s from conservatism to centrism, also had some impact here. My writings were essentially empiricist. Frequently they had a very specific focus.

I may never have visited the Northern Territory had not my two close friends Fred Robins and his wife My-Van Tran moved there to work at the Darwin Community College. My-Van, originally from Vietnam, was a specialist in Southeast Asian culture and history whom I first met when we were both doctoral students living at University House in Canberra in 1972. I met Fred, a British-born economist and marketing specialist, when he visited Canberra to see My-Van a couple of years later. They kindly suggested that I stay with them in Darwin. I did so in August 1979.

I flew there from Rockhampton via Townsville and Cairns. My-Van and Fred met me at Darwin's less than impressive airport terminal, a converted Second World War hangar, and drove me to their flat in the suburb of Millner. The block of flats was at that time the largest in the city. It was quite ugly but survived Cyclone Tracy and had a pleasant swimming pool. The flat itself was most comfortable, with air conditioning, two bedrooms and a large balcony. That evening Fred took me Nightcliff, where I later lived for many years, to watch the spectacular sunset. Over the following few days I visited the Casuarina and Winnellie campuses of Darwin Community College, the city centre and various suburbs. I had mixed impressions. More so than today, the suburbs then generally appeared rather dreary. Many people took little care of their houses and gardens. On the other hand, the sea was a beautiful blue-green colour. One evening My-Van and Fred invited Alan Powell and his wife Wendy to dinner. Alan was then Senior Lecturer in History at Darwin Community College and engaged in research that later resulted in his highly regarded book *Far Country: A Short History of the Northern Territory*. We subsequently became colleagues and friends. He and

Wendy told me about their cruising yacht, in which they had travelled along parts of the Territory's coast.

The highlight of my visit was a car trip with My-Van and Fred 'down the Track', that is the Stuart Highway, to Katherine. We called in on the oasis like town of Batchelor and the picturesque Second World War cemetery at Adelaide River before reaching Katherine, then a town of a few thousand inhabitants about 300 kilometres south of Darwin. We camped the night near the famous Katherine Gorge, a place of great importance to the Jawoyn people in what later became Nitmiluk National Park, before taking an all day tour of the Gorge. Much of the Gorge was filled with water. We travelled partly in flat-bottomed boats and partly on foot. The views were breathtaking – tall, multi-coloured cliffs and some dense vegetation. We also swam and viewed Aboriginal rock art.



**The author after a swim at Katherine Gorge in 1979**

I was in Darwin again for a short visit to see My-Van and Fred in June 1981. They had by then moved to a house in Jabiru, one of the city's northern suburbs. Built not long after Cyclone Tracy, the house was like a small fortress. Activities included attending a ballet performance in the Darwin Botanic Gardens' outdoor amphitheatre, seeing the huge numbers of birds at sunset at Fogg Dam near Darwin and watching the annual Beer Can Regatta at Fannie Bay. At Batchelor we had lunch with the Head of Darwin Community College's School of Australian Linguistics Kevin Ford and his wife Lis. I caught up with the newly appointed Curator of History at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory John Coe, whom I taught at The University of Western Australia. The Museum had only very recently moved into much improved new premises at Bullocky Point. Its section on Northern Territory history lacked many artefacts but provided a good overview.



**My-Van Tran and Fred Robins at Fogg Dam in 1981**

I saw enough of Darwin during these visits to want to spend more time there. As the author Suzanne Falkiner wrote in 1992, it was the 'most isolated of Australian cities, and yet also the most exotic and cosmopolitan'.<sup>7</sup> It was large enough, with a population of about

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<sup>7</sup> Suzanne Falkiner, *The Writer's Landscape*, Simon & Schuster, Sydney, 1992, p 204.

60,000, to have a wide range of cultural and recreational facilities. These included good restaurants, regular musical and theatrical events and well-stocked bookshops. Its very multi-racial population included significant Aboriginal, Chinese, Greek, Filipino and Indonesian communities. The average age was lower than in other Australian capital cities. Social activities often occurred on large verandahs or outdoors, including camping expeditions to places such as the newly declared Kakadu National Park. Holidays in Bali, only a relatively short flight from Darwin, were easily affordable and popular. Mainly away from work places but also sometimes at them and throughout the entire year men and women were frequently attired in comfortable clothing such as shorts, sarongs, singlets and t-shirts. Darwin had the reputation of being a city where people could make a fresh start in life or achieve more rapid professional advancement than elsewhere. Despite the destruction of cyclones and a world war, evidence of a colourful past was provided in buildings that went back to Darwin's beginnings. There seemed to be refreshingly few of the more obvious traditional class and status divisions in cities like Sydney, although I later discovered that I was naïve in initially assuming they scarcely existed in Darwin.

There were other aspects to Darwin that I found far less attractive but needing historical perspectives. It was quite often said that the city was 'North of the Ten Commandments'. As the Darwin born anthropologist Tess Lea commented in 2015, Darwin and the rest of the Northern Territory have long been 'a place where people seeking radical escape from their own psyches seek regeneration in the anarchic, forgiving and forgetful borderlands'.<sup>8</sup> Brief and sometimes brutal sexual relationships were quite common. A high level of alcohol consumption resulted in numerous violent incidents. In spite of multiculturalism, ugly racism existed among sections of the population. A recently established temporary casino in Darwin's Don Hotel was already causing significant social problems that the Northern Territory Government downplayed as it sought external investment for the much larger casinos in both Darwin and Alice Springs that still operate.

I was, for various reasons, becoming rather restless in Rockhampton. I enjoyed the city and many aspects of my work there but it was a place with many social constraints and

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<sup>8</sup> Tess Lea, 'The NT Gets Away with Madness because its Ideas (and Money) are Imported', 3 February 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/03/the-nt-gets-away-with-madness-because-its-ideas-and-money-are-imported>, accessed 4 February 2015.

the Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education was experiencing worrying problems. I was beginning to wonder whether I wanted to continue as an academic historian.

With these considerations in mind, I applied for the position of Director of the National Trust of Australia (Northern Territory) in July 1981 and was interviewed in Darwin for the job the following month. It was evident during the interview that the Trust had many recent and current difficulties but its task of trying to safeguard the Territory's cultural heritage were appealing. Its Council members on the interview panel impressed me. I decided without much hesitation to accept the position when it was offered to me and I arranged to move to Darwin in November.

**City lecturer appointed as NT head of National Trust**

Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education history lecturer Dr David Carment has been appointed to head the National Trust in the Northern Territory.

Dr Carment has been at the CIAE for the past five years and begins work as Director of the National Trust in the Territory on November 16.

He is no newcomer to the Trust, having been Rockhampton branch chairman for the past 18 months.

Dr Carment said yesterday he always believed historians should do more than just teach their subject.

He said his new job would enable him to give more of his expertise to the wider community.



● Dr Carment

"I suppose five years in any job is long enough, and I'm sure the new job will be quite a challenge," he said.

"The Northern Territory is an area that is developing very quickly and I'm looking forward to the whole thing."

The National Trust is mainly funded by government grants. Its role is to maintain Australia's heritage.

## CHAPTER TWO

### NATIONAL TRUST DIRECTOR 1981-1983

National Trusts were formed in different parts of Australia during the 1940s and 1950s. Campaigns to preserve native bush areas and old mansions provided the spirit to found organisations based on the model established in England in 1894. ‘Their founders’, the historian Graeme Davison notes, ‘were mostly members of the local landed and professional elite united by a conception of the natural and built heritage as a “trust” held by the present for posterity’.<sup>9</sup> Established in Alice Springs in 1958, the Northern Territory’s National Trust became an incorporated organisation, the National Trust of Australia (Northern Territory), following the Territory’s Legislative Assembly passing of an ordinance in 1976. Following an impressive period of growth that owed much to its first Director the historian Peter Forrest, in 1980 it encountered financial difficulties that led to Forrest’s departure. The broad priorities he established, though, guided the Trust for many years thereafter. I accepted the Director’s position with few firm preconceptions about what I might find but with vague notions about the need to develop a community sense of identity based on links between the present and the past. I knew that the Trust had important educational, property and research functions and about 300 members throughout the Territory. I was impressed by what appeared to be the Northern Territory Government’s genuine support.

I drove from Rockhampton to Darwin during early November 1981. The trip was not without drama as I hit a kangaroo near Hughenden in Queensland and only just beat floodwaters crossing the highway near Mount Isa. My first stop in the Territory was at Barry Caves on the Barkly Highway to get petrol. Not far from this isolated service station, which was demolished some years ago, was the welcoming sign ‘Trespassers Will Be Shot’.

The Trust President, Ruary Bucknall, whom I first met at my interview, proved most welcoming. Originally from Victoria, he was a young schoolteacher with a passion for history and heritage. He later became a high school principal in Darwin. My new

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<sup>9</sup> Graeme Davison, ‘National trusts’, in Graeme Davison, John Hirst & Stuart Macintyre (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, p 458.

office was in Lyons Cottage, also known as the British Australia Telegraph Company Residence. It was a stone house on Darwin's Esplanade originally erected as a residence in 1925 for executives of the company that operated the cable link between Darwin and the Dutch East Indies. The only other employee was a half-time secretary, the very efficient Azizah Williams. I had a busy first week trying to get on top of what seemed to be the main priorities. I attended a meeting of the Northern Territory Government's Heritage Advisory Committee, on which I was the Trust's representative. Two matters that occupied much of my time were the proposed restoration of the historic former railway station in Katherine, a Trust property, and the handover of Darwin's former Fannie Bay Gaol to the Trust's custodianship. I rapidly found that the Trust's budget was only barely enough and there was a considerable debt.



**Lyons Cottage in 1982**

The Trust provided me with a comfortable high set three-bedroom house, which it rented at a highly subsidised rate from the Northern Territory Government, in the suburb of Stuart Park. I was fortunate to have it as if I had been a government rather than a Trust employee my single status would have made me ineligible for such accommodation. At home and elsewhere when I was not working I mostly conformed to Darwin's informal dress code.

I remained particularly busy right through until Christmas. I was involved in negotiations involving the transfer of a late 1930s house, known as the Giese Residence or Audit House, to the National Trust. I met government representatives to discuss

various restoration projects. Of particular interest was a visit to Channel Island, where I inspected the remains of a leprosarium that was mainly used for Aboriginal inmates. Harry Giese, a retired senior public servant who played an important role in the implementation of assimilation policies for Aborigines during the 1950s and 1960s, met me to outline the activities of the Northern Territory Government's History Unit, of which he was in charge. Another meeting was with Ron Davis, the delightful Director of the Northern Territory Library Service, who showed me around the State Reference Library in Darwin and proudly explained that there were more library books per head of population in the Territory than in any other part of Australia. A lot of time was spent both then and throughout my tenure as Director in meetings of the Trust's Executive, its various other committees and outside committees, such as the government's Oral History Committee, the Northern Territory Historical Materials Coordinating Group and the Darwin Australia Day Committee, on which I represented the Trust. The Trust Council met two or three times a year. Ruary and I had an interesting visit to Pine Creek, a small town couple of hundred kilometres south of Darwin. En route we stopped at Snake Creek Siding to look at the extensive complex of Second World War ammunitions depots and other buildings. Pine Creek began as a gold mining settlement. Many structures, usually made of timber and corrugated galvanised iron, from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries survived. The town also had a National Trust branch. It was during this visit that I met for the first time Gaye Lawrence, who had arrived in Pine Creek as a young woman from the south seeking an alternative life style and who over the next two decades played a vital role in the Trust. Not long before my short Christmas break in Sydney I was called in for a meeting with the Territory's colourful and controversial Chief Minister Paul Everingham to discuss his wish to plant trees outside Fannie Bay Gaol. Everingham was responsible for shaping a clearer sense of identity among the Territory's non-Aboriginal residents after self-government, an issue I was to explore in some of my later publications. Before I left his office, he presented me with a Territory tie and Territory cuff links from a large cupboard that was full of these.

Shortly after Christmas, I made my first visit to Alice Springs in the Territory's south. The town's striking physical setting on both sides of the MacDonnell Ranges immediately appealed to me. I stayed there with Graeme Bucknall, a member of the

Trust's Council and chair of its McDouall Stuart Branch, and his wife Jean. They were also Ruary's parents. A prominent Uniting Church minister in the Northern Territory, Graeme was a fine historian of Central Australia as well as being an outstanding photographer. He showed me around many of Alice Springs' historic places. We went to the museum at the Old Timers' Home, where he and Jean lived, and the former Hartley Street School, which the Trust was fighting to acquire and save from demolition. We also saw Adelaide House, established by the Reverend John Flynn ('Flynn of the Inland') as Central Australia's first hospital, Flynn's grave located in a beautiful situation at the foot of Mount Gillen, the former Overland Telegraph Station and the Pitchi Ritchi Sanctuary, with its eccentric collection of relics and sculptures. I also met various other local Trust members, most notably Tom and Pat Fleming. Tom was a Baptist minister. For many years, he and Pat were based at the remote Aboriginal settlement of Yuendumu on the edge of the Tanami Desert, where they had a considerable influence on the Warlpiri people. A former Trust President, Tom in early 1982 was the Vice-President. Coincidentally, he knew my father well as they were both Japanese prisoners of war at Sandakan and Kuching in Borneo between 1942 and 1945. He and Pat had extensive knowledge of the Territory's history and were fiercely determined to preserve its cultural heritage.



**Graeme Bucknall at John Flynn's grave in 1982**

From Alice Springs I flew to Tennant Creek, established in the early 1930s as the result of a gold rush. Michael Hester and Bill Fullwood, both active in the Trust, looked after me there. Michael, a former British merchant seaman, was extraordinarily knowledgeable about the town's history. Bill arrived to work in nearby mines shortly after the Second World War. Now retired, he was an accomplished artist and musician. He took me on a tour of local old mines, Aboriginal sites, water holes, the abandoned Manga Manda Aboriginal mission with its adobe structures and an unusual collection of boulders known as The Devils Pebbles. I also visited Bill's house, The Gunyah, a large and eccentric two-storey structure that he built himself with locally available materials. There I met his wife Marjorie, who first arrived in Tennant Creek at the beginning of its gold rush.

Back in Darwin, I was mainly occupied during January and February 1982 with various tasks in the office, including preparing the nomination of Darwin's 1938 Admiralty House to the Commonwealth's Register of the National Estate, putting together grant applications and preparing for a Trust Council meeting. On Australia Day I conducted the first of many historical walks over the next 24 years. I showed about 40 people Darwin's more important heritage places in the city's central business district. In Darwin at this time in his role as Australian of the Year were my former doctoral supervisor Manning Clark and his wife Dymphna. We enjoyed catching up over dinner and, with Alan Powell, visited the Adelaide River War Cemetery and the disused uranium mine at Rum Jungle near Batchelor. As nearly always on such occasions, Manning took extensive notes. In early February there was another Heritage Advisory Committee meeting. It began to occur to me during this meeting that many Committee members, all of whom other than myself represented government agencies, were not interested in heritage and found my enthusiasm for it rather tiresome. The Committee only had a limited role. In late February I drove with Ruary to Katherine for a meeting that set up a Trust branch in the town. It was there that I met for the first time Gillian Banks. An artist and schoolteacher, she sometimes almost single-handedly kept the Trust alive in Katherine for many years thereafter.



**Manning Clark, Dymphna Clark and Alan Powell at Rum Jungle in 1982**

My first car trip ‘down The Track’, that is the Stuart Highway, to Alice Springs took place in early March. I looked at mining sites in the Pine Creek district and stopped at as many places with historical associations as I could on the road to Tennant Creek. Among them was a cemetery erected by soldiers during the Second World to commemorate the main characters in Mrs Aeneas Gunn’s *We of the Never Never*. I stayed in Tennant Creek with Trust Councillor Hilda Tuxworth, a former nursing sister who was the author of the only comprehensive history of the town. The mother of Ian Tuxworth, a Territory cabinet minister and later Chief Minister, she took her role as Tennant Creek’s ‘leading lady’ seriously but also had a delightful sense of humour. While in ‘Tennant’, as the locals called it, I went to the town’s Catholic church, erected in 1938 after having been moved all the way from Pine Creek. I also saw the 1870s Overland Telegraph station not far from the town and the Warrego Mine. After leaving Tennant Creek, I stopped at Bonney Well, a Trust property and one of the wells that served the Overland

Telegraph Line stock route. Another stop was made at Attack Creek, where Aborigines halted the explorer John McDouall Stuart on one of his expeditions. I stayed with the Flemings in Alice Springs, where I attended a lecture by Eddie Connellan, the famous aviator and airline owner. Frustratingly, he said little about his own life and mainly discussed what he foresaw as future technological developments. My other activities in 'The Alice' included negotiations with the town council regarding transferring Hartley Street School to the Trust, looking after the visiting Vice-Chairman of the National Trust in the United States Robertson Collins, meeting some key people in the local tourist industry and calling on Goff Letts, the Director of the Territory Conservation Commission (the parks service). I returned to Darwin with a stop over in Katherine.

Back in Darwin much of my time was once more occupied with a range of administrative and financial tasks and meetings as well as talks on the Trust to various other community groups. During early April I began negotiations with officers from the Territory's Department of Education, particularly the historian Tony Austin, about possible joint projects in which it and the Trust might be involved that ultimately resulted in the production of various school kits on heritage topics.

During May I was in Canberra for an Australian Council of National Trusts meeting, one of several that I attended over the next couple of years, and discussions there with bureaucrats in the heritage area. Later that month I flew to Nhulunbuy, on the Gove Peninsula in Arnhem Land, where the local amateur historian Phil Herdman showed me around the town and its surrounding area. Highlights included a range of sites associated with the Second World War, the wonderful art centre at Yirrkala and our journey over rough bush tracks with two traditional Aboriginal custodians to Wirrawiraway, a beautiful area besides a pristine beach. There we saw Aboriginal stone pictures of the Macassan vessels from eastern Indonesia that visited until the early twentieth century. Bill Pretty, another local resident with strong historical interests, took me to some significant trees. I returned to Darwin just in time for a Trust Council meeting. Efforts that Phil and I made to establish a Trust branch at Nhulunbuy were, unfortunately, unsuccessful due to lack of sufficient interest in the town.



**The author speaking to visitors at Fannie Bay Gaol in 1982**



**Wirrawirraway in 1982**

During June the Trust received Howard Pearce's comprehensive report on the Pine Creek Heritage District, which resulted in my preparing a number of nominations for the Australian Heritage Commission's Register of the National Estate and visiting Pine Creek to discuss the report's recommendations with the local Trust branch. It was during this trip that Earl Gano, a flamboyant local resident who originally hailed from Canada and ran a tour operation, took me on an expedition in his four wheel drive vehicle to many old mining sites dating back to the gold rush era. Ruary Bucknall and I also had quite a long session with the new Commonwealth Minister for Home Affairs and Environment Tom McVeigh while he was in Darwin. We argued for a much bigger Commonwealth administrative grant to the Trust and suggested changes to the National Estate grants programs. Taking advantage of the glorious Dry Season weather, a large New South Wales National Trust tour group arrived in Darwin, where I helped to show it around.

One of my more interesting activities in July and August was the preparation of a report for the Northern Territory Development Corporation on historic sites in and around Adelaide River. The report involved both library research and quite a lot of fieldwork. Particularly important was the huge ammunitions depot at Snake Creek, which was rapidly deteriorating.

Following representations from Garth McPherson, a Trust member and policeman based at Timber Creek about 700 kilometres west of Darwin in the Victoria River District, in September I visited this region. With me was Adrian Welke, a well-known Darwin architect with a special interest in heritage conservation and an active Trust member. We went to the old Coolibah homestead made famous in the film *Jedda*, the former Timber Creek police stations, various marked boab trees and graves, the beautiful Jasper Gorge, which quickly became one of my favourite places, and Victoria River Downs homestead. At Bullita Station, we visited the owner Reg Durack, a member of the family made famous in his sister Mary's books *Kings in Grass Castles* and *Sons in the Saddle*. Although aged 73 and the owner of a luxurious house in Perth, he lived in a little iron hut. At the former Wimmera Nursing Home at Victoria River Downs, a station with a long record of mismanagement and poor treatment of its Aboriginal employees, there was a large camp of Aboriginal people living in appalling conditions. It was my first but,

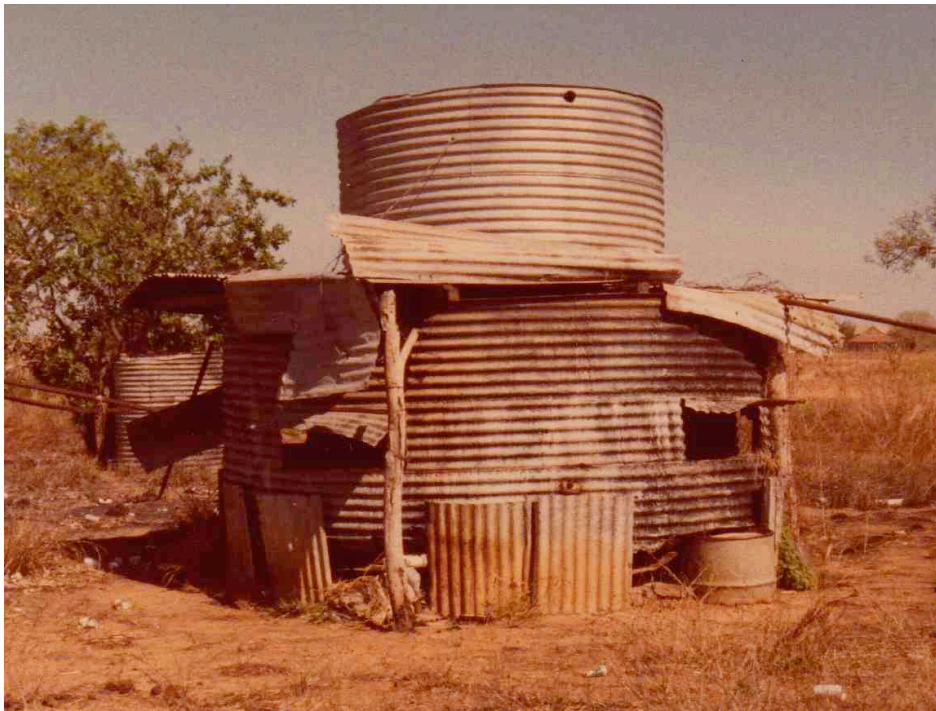
unfortunately, by no means my last such encounter in the Territory. The trip and the report that I wrote on it prompted the Trust to take a much greater interest than it had hitherto in the Victoria River District and to commence negotiations that ultimately resulted in its acquiring leases of the two oldest Timber Creek police station buildings.



**Garth McPherson and Adrian Welke near Timber Creek in 1983**

I had another long vehicle journey later that month, this time to Borroloola, about 1000 kilometres from Darwin near the Gulf of Carpentaria. With me was the historian Ann McGrath. She was then undertaking research for her acclaimed thesis and book about Aboriginal workers in the Territory's pastoral industry. She proved a great travelling companion. Founded in 1884, Borroloola in 1982 had about 400 Aboriginal and 40 white inhabitants. We stayed there with Trust member Judy Cotton, a schoolteacher and local historian. I gave a public lecture on the Trust's activities and visited such historical sites as the old police station, the former hotel, Chinese gardens, graves and the famous hermit Roger Jose's home, an old rainwater tank. Ann and I also met local Aboriginal people, including the well-known activist Mussolini Harvey who

proudly told us about his work during the 1930s as a crewman on boats sailing in the Gulf. En route back to Darwin, we stopped at Mallapunyah Springs Station, home since 1928 to the Darcy family, whose isolation and partly Aboriginal ancestry resulted in their own local dialect. I was anxious how the reputedly reclusive family would respond to our unannounced visit but Wagga Darcy, the family patriarch made well known in a 1981 television documentary, took an immediate liking to Ann and we were well received. The abandoned original homestead was almost entirely constructed with local timber and stone.



### **Roger Jose's former home in 1983**

An unexpected crisis developed in mid November when I learned that the Northern Territory Government took strong exception to the Trust's efforts to save Admiralty House from demolition. Suttons Motors, which occupied the block next door, wanted to acquire the property for a hotel development. The Government made it clear that its grants to the Trust were in jeopardy unless the Trust dropped its opposition to demolition. On another front, Chief Minister Everingham publicly attacked the Trust for

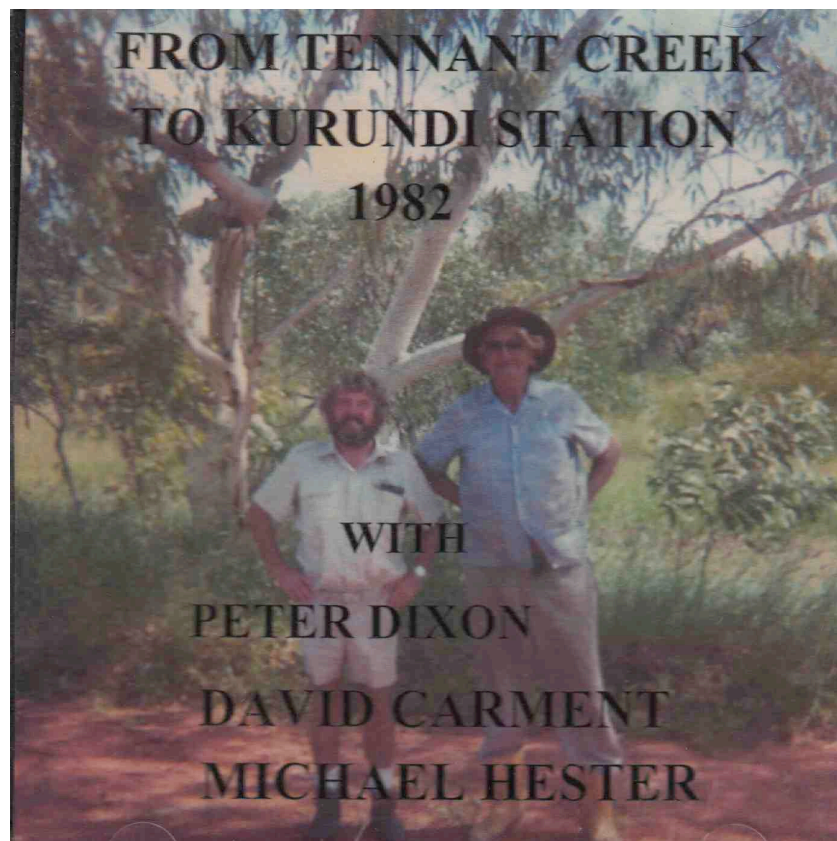
its expressions of concern about the environmental safeguards for the proposed Darwin to Alice Springs railway. In an effort to cool matters down, Ruary Bucknall and I met the Coordinator General Ray McHenry. He was widely disliked but for reasons I never quite understood was close to the Chief Minister. It was a heated and unpleasant occasion but Ray was reluctantly forced to concede that that government communications with the Trust were sometimes poorly handled. We were, importantly, assured that government funding to the Trust would continue. Admiralty House, however, remained a site of contention when the Territory government formally objected to it being placed on the Register of the National Estate. The government also decided, in what was widely viewed as an act of punishment, to take Fannie Bay Gaol away from the Trust's management and give it to the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. This was a quite serious blow as the Trust was beginning to make a profit out of the visitors who paid to see the Gaol.

I was on the road again not long after returning from holidays in February 1983, driving to Alice Springs, with stops at Pine Creek and Tennant Creek, for a Council meeting. By this time Tom Fleming had replaced Ruary Bucknall as President. Matters dealt with included relations with the Territory government, grant applications, property management and nominations to the World Heritage List. While in Alice Springs I met office bearers from the Ntaria Council at Hermannsburg, the historic former Lutheran mission west of Alice Springs, to discuss possible conservation and restoration work. This was the start of a fruitful period of cooperation between the Trust and Ntaria's traditional Aboriginal owners that resulted in successful applications for funds. Graeme Bucknall also took me to Old Hamilton Downs homestead north of Alice Springs that was built in the early years of the twentieth century and had a most picturesque natural setting.

Back in Darwin I represented the Trust in a meeting that led to the beginning of work on the *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography*, a project that occupied much of my time in the future. I first met Ian Tuxworth, the newly appointed Minister for Community Development and Hilda Tuxworth's son. My initial impressions were not especially positive, as he seemed, in spite of being a member, quite hostile to the Trust.

He later, though, turned out to be the best Minister with whom I worked as Trust Director.

There was another car trip to Alice Springs during April so that I could participate in a visit to Henbury Station, about 150 kilometres from the town. At Henbury I inspected the old homestead, which included a slab hut made of desert oak, and also visited the nearby meteorite craters. On the way home I stopped off in Tennant Creek to discuss various matters, including a planned survey of local heritage sites, with branch members. Michael Hester and I accompanied Peter Dixon, an elderly local Warumungu man, on a visit to his home country at Kurundi Station where Peter once worked as head stockman. We recorded a long interview with him during the trip for the Trust's Tennant Creek archives that Michael much later made into a compact disc. Peter described his detailed memories of places that we passed, particularly his favourite camping spots.



**Michael Hester and Peter Dixon, as shown on a compact disc cover, near Kurundi Station in 1982**

By this stage widely ranging activities were considerably increasing the Trust's workload. It was managing a large number of Commonwealth and Territory government funded projects. Much of my time was spent in communicating with the consultants or volunteers undertaking them. The projects included reports on the Overland Telegraph Line's route, archaeological sites in the Pine Creek district, Tennant Creek historic sites, Roper Bar Police Station, Old MacDonald Downs homestead, Old Hamilton Downs homestead and Hermannsburg mission. The reports are still in most instances valuable for historians. The Trust also received government funds for much needed conservation work on its properties Pine Creek Railway Station, Pine Creek Repeater Station, the Giese Residence, Katherine Railway Station, Bonney Well and Stuart Town Gaol. Additional properties such as Adelaide River Railway Station, Wishart Siding and Hartley Street School were leased to ensure in the absence of sufficiently effective heritage legislation that they were not demolished. In association with the Territory's Department of Education, school kits were produced on Darwin, the Pine Creek district and cemeteries. Regular attention was given to seeking funds from the private sector, with several companies making contributions to projects like walk brochures. The Trust was involved in an ongoing battle with the Territory government to save the late 1930s housing precinct at Myilly Point from destruction. Heritage Week in May 1983 was filled with activities, including historic walks, an art exhibition and a garden party at the Giese Residence. Without the support of dedicated volunteers on the Trust Council and its various committee the burdens on myself would have been impossible to cope with.

Perhaps the most pleasurable occasion during my time as Director was in early May 1983 when Ian Tuxworth as Minister for Community Development opened the Trust's museum at the Pine Creek Repeater Station. Over two hundred people attended and everything went like clockwork. Peter Spillett, the pioneer of local history in the Territory who was then the Trust's Vice-President, and Sandra Smith, the energetic young chairperson of the Pine Creek Branch, spoke particularly well about heritage's role in bringing people in small communities together. The Minister was obviously impressed. The opening was followed by a huge lunch made up of plate loads of food contributed by Pine Creek residents, a tour of local historic sites led by Earl Gano and billy tea and damper.



**The author, Peter Spillett and Sandra Smith at the opening of the Pine Creek Repeater Station museum in 1983**

Later that month I made my first visit to Bathurst Island, the location of a precinct of Catholic mission buildings mainly established during the early twentieth century. Sister Anne Gardiner, Principal of the school at Nguiu and a keen local historian, looked after me. I assisted her with a funding application to upgrade the museum she had established. I also inspected and compiled a report on buildings such as the church, the presbytery and the radio hut from which unsuccessful warnings were sent to Darwin in

February 1942 about the impending Japanese air raid. The mission precinct was most attractively situated besides the sea and was surrounded with palm trees. Almost immediately after returning to Darwin I flew to Tennant Creek so that Michael Hester and I could do the work necessary to complete the survey on historic sites in and around the town. By this stage I was becoming absorbed in the story of Tennant Creek's 1930s gold rush, a topic that I continued to research and write about for some years thereafter. There were further journeys over the next couple of months to Pine Creek and the Victoria River District. The latter journey was an ambitious field trip that I organised for a group of about 30 Trust members. Jeanette Williams provided invaluable assistance well beyond the calls of our friendship by skilfully driving over terrible roads a troublesome rented bus conveying some of the participants.

For some time I was keen to visit Cobourg Peninsula, the site of Victoria Settlement, a British military outpost from 1838 to 1849. The opportunity came in late June when Alan and Wendy Powell invited some friends including me to join them on their yacht, which they were sailing around various parts of the peninsula. Two of our group, the historian Barbara James and her lawyer husband Geoff, arranged for their nephew Alan (later the manager of the Yothu Yindi band) to fly us to and from the peninsula in a small aeroplane. We then sailed up Port Essington, a superb and virtually deserted harbour, before anchoring near Victoria Settlement. Barbara and Geoff, both longstanding Territory residents, assured us that it was safe to camp on the beach. Some of us did so only on the following morning to discover crocodile tracks quite close to where we slept. Barbara and I became good friends and from time to time I reminded her of this. That same morning we inspected the settlement. The large 'Cornish' chimneys, the hospital remains and the cemetery with its sad graves of those who died of disease all created a powerful impression.

During late August and early September I joined my friends Helen and Michael Hennessy, whom I knew in Rockhampton, on a camping holiday in my small four-wheel drive vehicle. We explored many places of heritage importance in Central Australia such as Uluru, Kata Tjuta, the homestead at Glen Helen, the meteorite crater at Gosses (or Gosse) Bluff (now Tnorala) and the Aboriginal rock carvings at N'Dhala Gorge. My vehicle was clearly not designed for such a trip and never fully recovered from it.



**The author with his vehicle near N'Dhala Gorge in 1983**

Lobbying went on with the new Labor federal government for increased financial support. This involved my meeting the Minister for Home Affairs and Environment, Barry Cohen, members of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Conservation and the Environment and the Territory's federal parliamentary representatives Ted Robertson and John Reeves, and several media interviews. The Trust also lobbied the Territory government whenever it could. The efforts proved successful when total government grants to the Trust almost doubled between 1982-1983 and 1983-1984. Other fund raising produced over \$10,000. While the Trust's lobbying must have had some impact, the time was right for such increases. There was widespread community support for heritage conservation and government funding of it went up quite dramatically throughout Australia during the early 1980s.

I was enjoying much of my National Trust work and the opportunities it provided to see the Territory and meet interesting people. It was, however, pretty unrelenting, with lots of work on evenings and over weekends. I also often found activities associated with political lobbying and fund raising difficult and frustrating. When the opportunity came up to move back to academia, I decided to take it, accepting a History position at the Darwin Community College that started in November 1984. I hoped, rightly as it turned out, that this would allow me to continue my interests in the Territory's heritage and history and remain active in the Trust as a volunteer. I also missed teaching far more than I anticipated when I moved to Darwin. Luckily, the Trust quickly found a really excellent person in Penny Watson (later Cook) to replace me. She had strong administrative skills and was a member of the National Trust Council in Western Australia. My final few months as Director passed quickly, with further travel to Pine Creek, Katherine and Canberra, and lots of meetings. In September I presented a paper on the Trust's work in the Victoria River District to an Australian Historical Association conference in Toowoomba on Australian regional identities.

In 1984 I reflected on my National Trust experiences over the previous few years in an article published in the American journal *The Public Historian*. I pointed to a situation that was far more complex than it appeared to be when I decided to move to the Territory. I noted many continuing problems. It was difficult to accurately assess community support for cultural heritage issues. Greater public education on heritage matters was needed. It was desirable that those involved in the cultural heritage in other parts of Australia became more aware of what I described as the Territory's 'special qualities'.<sup>10</sup> There were complications associated with listing Aboriginal places on heritage registers and arguments about the most appropriate means of protecting those places. The Territory had a far more diverse and important non-Aboriginal built environment than the main official register of the time, the Register of the National Estate, indicated. Documentation and management of the Territory's cultural heritage were too slow. There was opposition in the Territory to conservation procedures accepted elsewhere in Australia. The Territory's heritage legislation enacted in 1955 came well

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<sup>10</sup> David Carment, 'Cultural Resource Management in Australia's Northern Territory: Problems and Prospects', in *The Public Historian*, vol 6, no 3, 1984, p 42.

before that in other states and territories and was no longer effective. Much greater attention to the management of historic sites was needed. Consistent and realistic levels of government funding were required. Skilled heritage practitioners were in short supply. The Trust was constrained by its dependence on government financial support. Public history programs in Australian universities such as those that existed in the United States were still lacking.

I was, perhaps, too concerned with such problems. When I consider the situation more than a quarter of a century later I can also see much that was positive and worthwhile. The Trust was the only non-government organisation at that time with an active role in the Territory's cultural heritage. Its membership increased from about 300 in 1982 to close to 500 two years later. It acquired more properties and began to properly conserve and interpret them. It took steps to begin its own register. It was an increasingly effective public advocate and community conscience on heritage issues. Credit for these achievements must largely go to hard working volunteers but in spite of all the difficulties I can now look back with at least some satisfaction on my own role.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**HISTORY AT A COLLEGE**  
**OF ADVANCED EDUCATION 1983-1986**

Darwin Community College opened in 1974. It was by 1981 a multi-level and multi-purpose institution providing about 90 per cent of the Northern Territory's post-secondary education. Its award courses ranged from graduate diplomas and degrees to Technical and Further Education (TAFE) bridging and preparatory classes as well as a great range of general interest and personal development programs. At the end of 1984 the College was renamed Darwin Institute of Technology. It was one of many post-secondary institutions in Australia classified as colleges of advanced education. It differed from most in bringing together degree and TAFE courses. A Northern Territory University Planning Authority also existed in Darwin but until 1986 there was uncertainty about whether any university in the city would develop out of the College and Institute, commence as an entirely separate institution or do so as part of an existing Australian university.

As a Lecturer in History I was initially located in the College's Department of Humanities and Social Sciences and later in the Department of Sociology and Social Policy. My role was to teach Australian and modern European history. Most of my students were studying Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education courses. While the main College campus was at Casuarina in northern Darwin, until the end of 1984 the Department's offices and classrooms were in a converted warehouse in the industrial suburb of Winnellie. I was appointed to the College's Academic Planning Committee in early 1984 and later in the year was elected to its Academic Board. At the beginning of 1985 I moved with the other members of the department to a new building in Casuarina. I was promoted to Senior Lecturer in January 1986.

My two historian colleagues in the department were my close friends Alan Powell, a Senior Lecturer who taught Northern Territory and ancient history, and My-Van Tran, a Lecturer and later a Senior Lecturer who taught Southeast Asian history. Both were active and highly regarded researchers, and were much involved in community

activities. Melbourne University Press published Alan's *Far Country* in 1982. My-Van authored significant publications on Vietnamese refugees in the Territory in addition to works on Vietnamese cultural history. She was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for her contributions to Asian-Australian relations in 1986. I also became friendly with English staff members Don Campbell, David Headon and Tony Scanlon, the political scientist Dennis Shoesmith, whom I first knew as a fellow doctoral student at The Australian National University, the psychologists David Livesey, Bob Preston and Glenn Ross, the sociologist Bill Tyler, and the anthropologists David and Lesley Mearns.

In 1982 I was elected to the Council of the Historical Society of the Northern Territory, on which I remained in various capacities until 2006. A remarkably active organisation, it had regular lectures and excursions, and published books. I also maintained my National Trust interests after 1983, serving on various Trust committees and in 1985 being elected to its Council. Wearing my National Trust hat, I participated in actions that prevented the Northern Territory Government from demolishing most of the remaining historic houses at Myilly Point. Other community involvements included my membership of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) Northern Territory Advisory Council from 1983 to 1985, the Australian Institute of International Affairs' Northern Territory Branch Council between 1982 and 1996, the Editorial Board of the local journal *Northern Perspective* from 1984 to 1999, and the Northern Territory Literary Awards Committee on which I served between 1984 and 2002 and chaired in 1986 and 1987.

Once I settled into my Winnellie office, I focussed on preparing teaching materials for the following year. I already had extensive lecture notes that I used at Capricornia but after a two-year break updating and reorganisation of them was required.

In late 1983 I purchased and moved into my home of the next 23 years, a just completed two-bedroom seafront apartment at 280 Casuarina Drive in Nightcliff. The apartment caught the sea breezes and was close to the College and the long Casuarina Beach, where I enjoyed walking. I swam regularly in the nearby and superbly situated Nightcliff Pool. I quickly became interested in Nightcliff's history. The location of a Second World War camp, relics of which I explored, after the war it became Darwin's first 'garden suburb'.



### **280 Casuarina Drive in 1985**

I also decided on research priorities. These initially developed my interests in the Northern Territory's historic built environment. My first projects were journal articles on the material evidence of the past at Adelaide River, Tennant Creek, Borroloola and the Victoria River District in which I used data accumulated while I was with the National Trust. I began work on a much larger study that ultimately resulted in a book and journal articles on Central Australia's historical landscapes. As time went on, I became increasingly interested in the Territory's political development since self-government. This was partly spurred by a wish to explain the Everingham government's contentious Aboriginal policies and its efforts to create a strong sense of Territory identity among non-Aboriginal residents. In early 1985 John Moses from The University of Queensland, the Editor of *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, asked me to write biannual political chronicles on the Northern Territory. I continued doing so until my retirement many years later. My only consultancy while at the College and Institute was a heritage report on the former Iron Blow Mine and Smelter near Pine Creek.

We were fortunate to have in Darwin The Australian National University's North Australia Research Unit (NARU), then under the distinguished political scientist Peter Loveday's able and energetic direction. He organised many seminars and conferences in which I was interested and was responsible for a wide-ranging publication program. We became good friends. In December 1983 I attended a NARU conference on 'People and Economy in the North' where there was much lively discussion. I took part in another useful conference during the following year on employment and unemployment in northern Australia. Peter, who was trained as a historian, was always keen to include historical perspectives in such events and was most efficient in publishing their proceedings. He was also an excellent host. In May 1986, for instance, I attended an enjoyable dinner that he organised for Bruce Hodgins, a visiting Canadian historian.

Teaching started in mid-February 1984. Student numbers were quite small but that appeared to matter little. There were 10 students in my subject on twentieth century Australia and 20 in an adult matriculation class I taught on Australian history. A fairly typical teaching week described in a letter to my parents written in March 1984 included lectures on Australian urbanisation and early Australian foreign policy and a tutorial on the right wing New Guard movement in New South Wales during the early 1930s. The students in the twentieth century Australia subject, most of whom were 'mature age', were generally able and enthusiastic. We had animated tutorial discussions and I read some excellent essays from them. The matriculation students, on the other hand, were much less interested. Perhaps it reflected on my inexperience in teaching at this level, but there was a much higher attrition rate than was the case with any degree level subject I ever taught. I started the second semester with 13 students studying a second year subject on modern European history and 20 in a first year subject on Australian history. I continued with the matriculation Australian history and taught in a first year Australian politics subject. The pattern continued largely unaltered in 1985 in 1986 except that I no longer taught the matriculation or Australian politics students. During the second semester of 1985, I did some of the teaching in the North Australian Studies subject that was compulsory for Education students and I taught a subject on Northern Territory history in 1986.

A few of the students were outstanding, as good as any I had encountered elsewhere. One of the best was Barbara James, already a university graduate and well established as a Territory historian, from whom I learned much more than I could have taught her when she did the Territory history subject. Her *No Man's Land: Women of the Northern Territory* appeared in 1989. It quickly became a best seller. Suzanne Saunders, later Suzanne Parry, was another particularly able student. I was pleased in early 1985 to recommend her to the Northern Territory Electricity Commission when it wanted someone to write a history of the former leprosarium at Channel Island, where the large new power station for Darwin was then being erected. She did this as an Honours thesis at Murdoch University that became the basis of *A Suitable Island Site: Leprosy in the Northern Territory and the Channel Island Leprosarium 1880-1955* published in 1989. Suzanne was subsequently a valued colleague and friend.

There were, probably inevitably in an academic institution at that time, far too many meetings. Some of my departmental colleagues loved such meetings and would often prolong them by hours. The College allowed the department a very democratic structure. It had its own constitution that provided for an elected Head. While such arrangements were quite common in Australian universities and colleges during the early 1980s and were admirable in principle, they frequently led to important decisions only being made tortuously following lengthy negotiations and compromises, provoked personal conflicts and distracted staff members from their research and teaching. The situation became even more difficult during the following year after Graham Davidson resigned as Head of Department (but not from his substantive position as a Principal Lecturer) in protest against the Northern Territory Government's appointment without advertisement of the Darwin Institute of Technology's first Director Kevin Davis, until then a senior public servant. Although I later liked and respected Kevin, I shared Graham's strong concerns about the government's arbitrary and, as it subsequently admitted, illegal decision. A department meeting then resolved that there would for the time being be a new Head of Department every two months. I took my turn as Head in April and May 1985 but it was quickly clear that the experiment was not going to work. Some stability returned when it was abandoned later in the year.

I generally, though, enjoyed my colleagues' company. We often socialised both on and off campus and joined together for camping expeditions. Favourite places for these were the Douglas (now Tjuwaliyn) Hot Springs Park about 200 kilometres and Edith Falls (now Leliyn) about 250 kilometres south of Darwin, both particularly attractive places with luxuriant tropical vegetation. The converted Winnellie warehouse was not, with its flimsy office partitions and flat metal roof that thundered in the wet season rain, an ideal structure for academic work but I remember it fondly for the camaraderie among its occupants. It also had its own library that included a large collection of primary sources on Northern Territory history. Many of my departmental colleagues possessed doctorates and some were engaged in innovative research that I enjoyed discussing with them. There was a Warehouse Seminars series that David Headon and I organised. It continued after the move to Casuarina. David also obtained funding that allowed some of Australia's most prominent writers such as Les Murray and Thea Astley to visit Darwin for readings and seminars.



**Darwin Institute of Technology colleagues with family members at Edith Falls in  
1985**

I especially liked the variety of my activities. In a not unusual week in April 1984, I attended a staff meeting, taught my usual classes and did a bit of research. Helen Wilson, the Executive Officer in the Northern Territory University Planning Authority's History Unit, and her husband Richard hosted a dinner that the Powells and I attended to meet a former Royal Air Force fighter pilot who served in Darwin during the Second World War. I also had dinner with a visiting historian friend from Armidale John Atchison, in Darwin for a conference, and invited some colleagues for dinner at my home. I talked about oral and local history techniques in multicultural education to a seminar of teachers and interpreters and chaired an Australian Institute of International Affairs lecture in which Dennis Shoesmith spoke on politics in The Philippines. There was a meeting with staff from the State Reference Library regarding space in its building for the Historical Society. I attended a Genealogical Society of the Northern Territory seminar on family history.

I continued to explore as much of the Territory as I could. In May 1984 I revisited Victoria Settlement at Cobourg Peninsula with a National Trust group. During the following month I led a combined Historical Society-National Trust expedition to Mallapunyah Springs and Borroloola. At Mallapunyah Springs Fiona Darcy, an Englishwoman who married one of the Darcys and became the family's historian, took us around the homestead precinct and the fruit and vegetable gardens that provided the station's income before it ran cattle. At Borroloola my friend Judy Whitaker (formerly Cotton) and her new American husband John showed us the town and took us to the nearby Wearyan River. As was normal on such trips, over a long weekend we drove a considerable distance, in this case about 2400 kilometres. I took David Headon with his wife Billie and their three children and dog to the Victoria River District's historic sites in early July, camping at Jasper Gorge. They enjoyed the experience so much that we were in region once more during Easter in the following year. Our second journey was a bit more adventurous than anticipated as my by now ailing vehicle proved inadequate on the muddy dirt road. It needed to be pushed out of a bog and a tyre was ripped to pieces. Another journey there a few months later in 1985 with several colleagues and their families was much less eventful. It was marked by pleasantly cool weather that made me glad to have brought some warm clothes. At the end of July 1984, I joined Alan Powell

and Tony Scanlon in Alan's yacht on a trip to Escape Cliffs, about 65 kilometres east of Darwin. Once there we inspected the remains of the former 1864-1867 South Australian settlement. We could see why it was abandoned as the site was badly located in an exposed area with a poor anchorage. In September 1984 and April 1986, I took Historical Society and National Trust groups to Adelaide River, showing people around the various places I came to know during my work as Trust Director. In late October 1985 I made the first of a number of trips to Point Stuart east of Darwin to identify the rather forlorn spot where the explorer John McDouall Stuart first saw the coast following his epic overland journey from South Australia in 1862. With me was the gifted amateur historian Willi Pedersen. Born in Denmark, he was a long-term Darwin resident who undertook pioneering research, especially on the early European exploration of the Victoria River District. During June 1986, I joined the Mearns family and Bill and Margaret Tyler in a comprehensive tour of all publicly accessible Aboriginal rock art sites in Kakadu National Park.



**The author at Victoria Settlement in 1984**



**Luke Headon, Ella Headon, Sam Headon, Billie Headon and David Headon with their dog Wicky at the former Victoria River Depot near Timber Creek in 1984**



**The author en route to Escape Cliffs on Alan Powell's yacht in 1984**

Two of my most worthwhile expeditions took place in 1986. In April that year the Darwin architect and heritage consultant Peter Dermoudy led a National Trust trip in which I participated to Larrimah and Daly Waters. At Larrimah he showed us remains of the huge military camps that were in the area between 1941 and 1945, the old hotel and Gorrie Airstrip, one of the main Royal Australian Air Force bases during the Second World War. At Daly Waters, we viewed the former airport, which at one stage was used by international aircraft. The other journey was the Historical Society's trip to the Roper River area during early August in which I had as passenger my friend Christine Pittman, a Darwin librarian who later became President of the Genealogical Society of the Northern Territory and now lives in London. I described the journey in a letter to my parents of 4 August 1986:

*We drove to Roper Bar via Mataranka. Most of the road is sealed. It passes through some very attractive country. I passed the entrance to Roper Valley Station [which, as discussed in Chapter One, my father had twice visited]. Roper Bar is a lovely spot and of historic interest. Near the pretty river crossing is the old police station complex, part of which goes back to the 1880s. We lunched there and met others of our group, a dozen altogether. We then drove about 130 kilometres along a dirt road to a bend in the river near the entrance to the sea, where we camped for the night in a superb spot with sweeping river views. The sunset was breathtaking and the night crisp and cold. In the morning, a local fisherman took us in his boat to the other side of the river. [It was Aboriginal land on the river's northern bank but we had Northern Land Council permits to go there]. We then walked through thick bush and climbed Mount Moore. There we took in a panoramic view of the surrounding country, saw the cairn erected in the 1870s and fortifications set up during the Second World War. Once we returned to our campsite, we visited the nearby site intended in the 1880s for the town of Port Roper, which was never actually established. We had a pleasant dinner around the campfire. Today I drove the 800 kilometres back to Darwin, arriving at about 7.00 tonight.*



**National Trust group at the former Daly Waters airport in 1986**



**Christine Pittman on the cairn at Mount Moore in 1986**

Despite their isolation, the College and Institute had a steady stream of academic visitors, some with historical interests. In June 1984, for example, Andrew Mack, an international relations expert from The Australian National University, spoke on the Soviet Union's recent history and Ann McGrath, then at Monash University, gave an especially interesting seminar on how Xavier Herbert wrote his famous Territory based novel *Capricornia*. Later in the year, James Cook University psychologist Philip Pearce talked to staff on tourists' motivations at historic sites. I later, with due acknowledgment, incorporated some of his stimulating views in my own research.

The College and Institute encouraged staff to go to conferences. In August 1984 I was in Melbourne for one of the many worthwhile Australian Historical Association conferences in which I participated during my academic career. I attended sessions on maritime history, sports history, immigration, war and society, Aboriginal history, historians and past cultures, teaching history, historians' social responsibilities, women and the family, and archaeology. During August the following year I went to the first of several International Mining History Conferences that I attended. At The University of Melbourne, it attracted participants from numerous countries. It proved useful for the further research I was contemplating on mining in Central Australia as it covered technology, investment, archaeology, safety and working conditions. In November 1985 the Commonwealth government's Committee to Review Australian Studies in Tertiary Education flew me to Canberra to give a paper on the Northern Territory in a seminar organised by the prominent historian Kay Daniels on History and cultural resources. A mixture of academics and cultural resource managers were present with papers ranging over a variety of issues. The Australian Historical Association conference in Adelaide during August 1986 was valuable. Organised by Norman Etherington of The University of Adelaide, it emphasised History's community roles. My own paper at the conference, later published as a *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* article, was on Central Australia's historic landscapes. While in Adelaide I paid my homage to the statue of the explorer John McDouall Stuart.



**The author at the John McDouall Stuart statue in 1986**

In 1986, the Northern Territory Government established the University College of the Northern Territory, which was affiliated with The University of Queensland. I applied and was interviewed in Brisbane during June for the position of Senior Lecturer in History there. Although Alan Powell was the College's foundation Dean of Arts and Professor of History, I was far from confident about getting the job. There was tough competition for it. I was also interviewed in Canberra during May for the position of Senior Curator in Australian Social History at the new National Museum of Australia. At that stage, the Museum had no permanent home and there were doubts about its future. I was, though, interested in being part of a national institution and worried about what might occur if I was not employed at the new university college. I later received several telephone calls in June from senior Museum staff suggesting that I would in due course be offered the position and expressing hope that I was still interested. I also, at the Museum's request, met the delightful Chairman of its Council Alex Dix when he visited Darwin. Just as all this was happening, I was formally offered the University College job, which, after much thought, I accepted and withdrew my Museum application. I suspect I would still have made the same decision even if I had a formal offer from the Museum but its frustrating delay in producing one made the process more straightforward. As things turned out, it was a sensible move as the Museum experienced many difficulties before it was finally adequately funded.

After using some long service leave to stay with my parents in Sydney, I took up my new appointment in November 1986. While I had no doubts about the wisdom of leaving the Institute, I did so with mixed feelings. In spite of their various problems, it and the Community College helped me develop as a historian. I learned a lot about teaching from some of my colleagues and students, and was encouraged to pursue my community and research interests.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY 1986-1988

Working at the University College of the Northern Territory proved fulfilling. I enjoyed being in a new institution and with some stimulating colleagues and students. The University of Queensland's Department of History provided generous guidance but did not arbitrarily interfere. I taught subjects on Australian, North Australian and modern European history, was the History Discipline Coordinator, acted as Dean of Arts on various occasions, was President of the Academic Board, and served on various committees. I continued my research and writing on Central Australia and Northern Territory politics and for the *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography*, of which I became General Editor in 1989. I remained much involved in the Historical Society, of which I was President between 1987 and 1990, and the National Trust.

My first office on taking up my position in early November 1986 was in the former Darwin Primary School, a historic precinct of buildings surrounded by lush tropical gardens. Alan Powell was already there as was the other historian Paul Webb. Paul earlier worked in the Northern Territory as an Anglican Bush Brother but had more recently completed a doctorate in modern Indonesian history at James Cook University. He remained an ordained Anglican minister. He was appointed to the College to teach subjects on Southeast Asia. An interesting, and quite often eccentric, individual, he was a 'high church' theological conservative who so strongly opposed the ordination of women that he later left the Anglican Church to become a Catholic priest. He was also a political libertarian with a passionate commitment to human rights, tirelessly working for Burmese and Cambodian refugees. He was a conscientious teacher and an active researcher.

The College's subsequent success owed much to its Warden Jim Thomson, a former Deputy Vice-Chancellor at The University of Queensland. He was energetic, enthusiastic and effective in dealing serious difficulties, including hostility from sections of the Darwin Institute of Technology and the Commonwealth government, which believed that the Northern Territory Government's establishment of the College was

premature. He recruited highly qualified staff members and supervised the conversion of the former Darwin Hospital buildings at Myilly Point so that the College could use them. Although a scientist, he actively supported the humanities and social sciences. He had a special interest in History, attending an academic conference in the discipline during his 1988 recreation leave.

My first few months at the College, with the exception of a short break staying with my parents in Sydney over the Christmas-New Year period, were mainly occupied with preparing teaching materials and interviewing potential students. I also, with the psychologist Glenn Ross from the Darwin Institute of Technology, commenced a new research project on visitor attitudes regarding Fannie Bay Gaol that resulted in an article in *The Beagle* journal. Early in January the College moved into its new premises. The builders did an excellent job. My spacious and well-furnished office had a view over Darwin. It also included my first desktop personal computer.



**The author at his University College of the Northern Territory office in 1987**

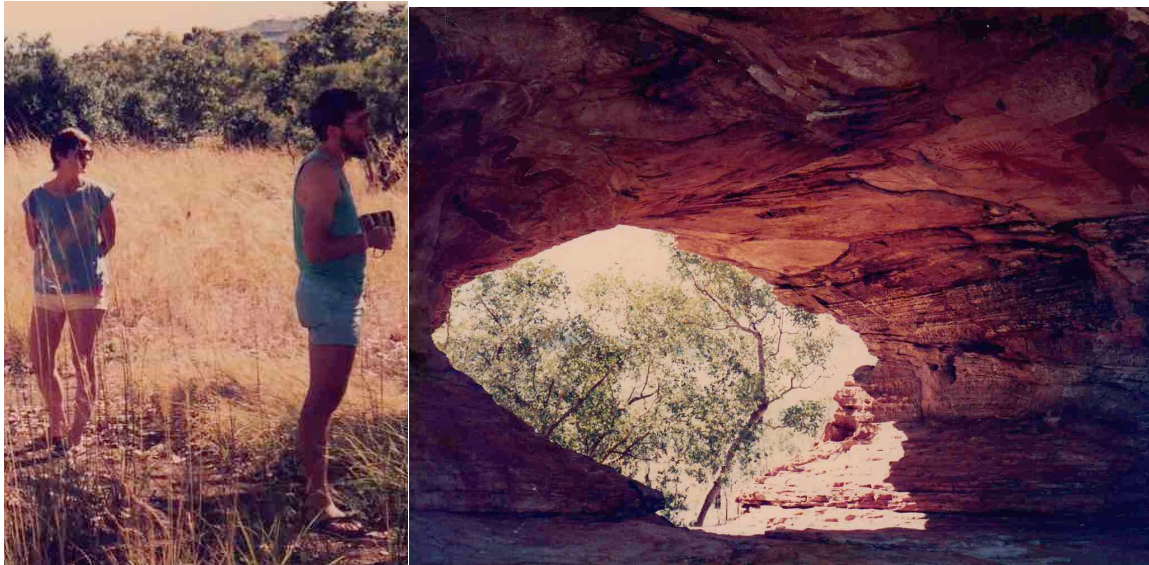
Classes commenced during the last week of February 1987. There were 26 students in my introductory Australian history subject and eight in my advanced Australian history subject. There were more school leavers than was the case in my Darwin Institute of Technology subjects, including some from parts of the Territory outside Darwin. The students generally seemed enthusiastic.

The College officially opened on 4 March with an impressive ceremony at which I and other College staff members wore our academic gowns. Chairman of the College Council Austin Asche, Chief Minister Steve Hatton, Territory Minister for Education Tom Harris, and Administrator Eric Johnston all made speeches, with the Administrator unveiling a plaque.

As part of my research on Northern Territory politics I closely followed the Legislative Assembly elections on 7 March. That evening I went to the election tally room to watch the results go up. The Country Liberal Party under Hatton was returned to power with a slightly reduced majority. The newly formed Territory Nationals, closely aligned with Joh Bjelke-Petersen in Queensland, obtained about 17 per cent of the vote but failed to win a seat. Among the party's defeated candidates was my friend Bob Preston. Previously a strong Labor supporter, his move to the Nationals was difficult to understand. I was pleased that the Nationals did more poorly than some anticipated following their well funded campaign but had doubts about the Country Liberals' ability to provide stable government.

I enjoyably spent Easter with my visiting friends the Hennessys camping at and exploring Keep River National Park in the Territory's northwest. Despite the often intense heat, we followed many of the park's walks through rugged and spectacular scenery and visited the remarkable Nganalam Aboriginal art site, where there were about 2,500 engravings and paintings on the walls of beautiful rock shelter. Especially prominent was a painting of a large snake-like figure the local Mirriwung people called Garrimalam, the rainbow snake and an important creation figure. We also crossed the border into Western Australia, visiting Kununurra and the nearby Lake Argyle, which straddles the Territory border in places and was created for the controversial Ord River irrigation scheme. While at the lake we inspected the former stone homestead of the Durack family, pioneers of the pastoral industry in the Victoria River District and

northwest Western Australia. We visited historic places in and around Timber Creek on the way home.

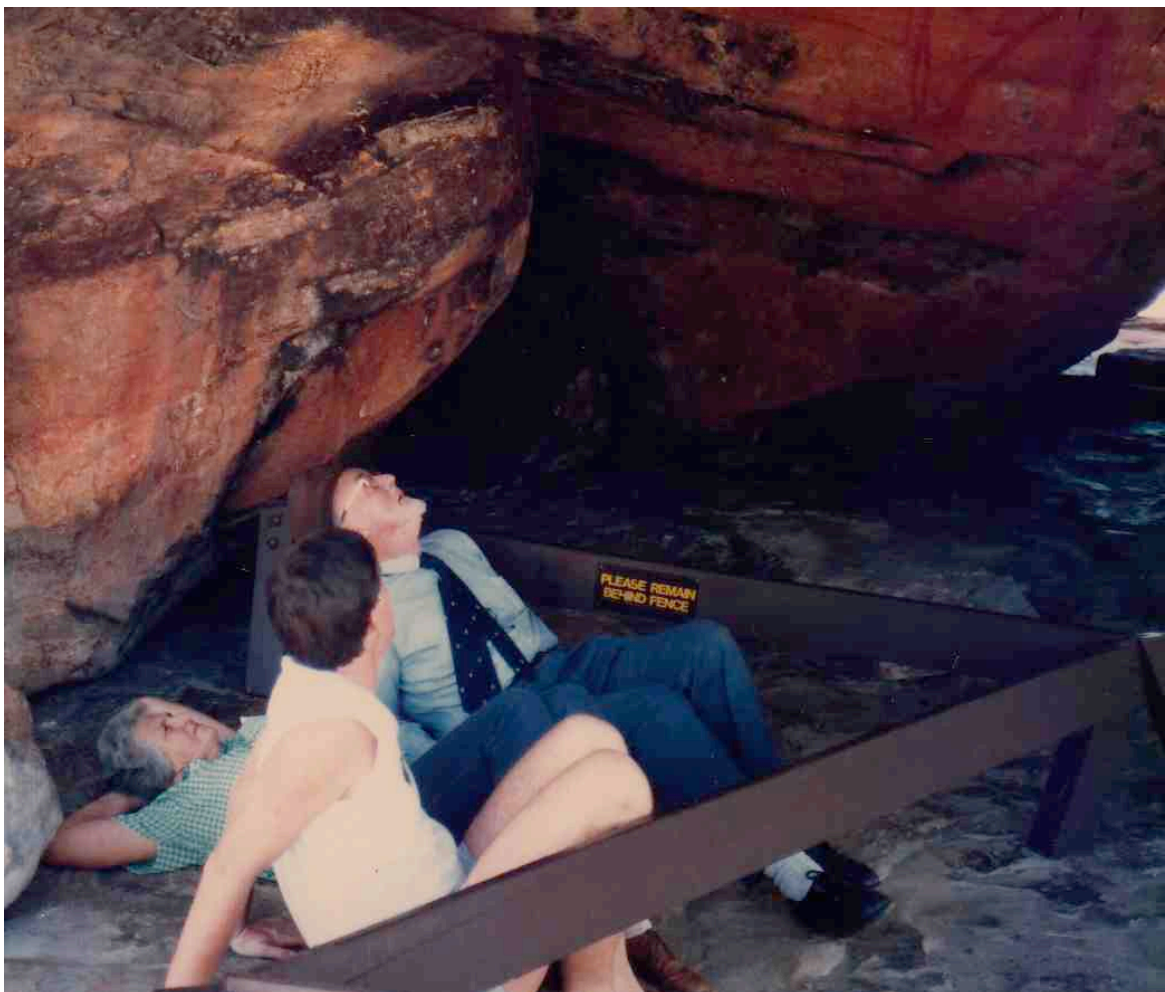


**Helen and Michael Hennessy at Keep River National Park and Nganalam  
Aboriginal art site in 1987**

As the Dry Season progressed, other travel to places of heritage and historic interest followed. In June I participated in another National Trust expedition to the Victoria River District, camping near Timber Creek and at Jasper Gorge. I was keen to do further research and writing on the area. Later that month I took the visiting Dean of Law from The University of Queensland Ken Sutton to Edith Falls. Another journey before the month was over was with a National Trust group to Southport, the site of quite a large nineteenth century town near Darwin but by the early twentieth century virtually deserted. Just about all that obviously remained was some rusting equipment.

In early July I looked after David Headon, who had moved to a position at the Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra. He was in Darwin for the local launch of the *Oxford Literary Guide to Australia*, to which we had both contributed. Manning and Dymphna Clark also arrived in Darwin at much the same time. Manning gave well-attended public lectures on Aborigines in Australian history, and H.V. Evatt and Robert Menzies. I drove the Clarks and David to Kakadu National Park for a weekend. We

stayed at the comfortable motel in Coinda, visiting Ubirr (still then widely known as Obiri Rock) and Nourlangie and going on the boat trip at Yellow Water. Although unwell and very breathless, Manning painstakingly made the steep climb up Ubirr to properly see its rock art and the panoramic view from the top. Throughout the weekend he insisted on wearing his thick long sleeved shirt and Carlton Football Club tie in spite of the hot weather and the fact that no one else wore a tie at Kakadu. He was clearly delighted when various other park visitors recognised him. At dinner on Saturday night his old friend the Melbourne author Peter Blazey was in the motel restaurant and joined us for enjoyable conversation.



**Dymphna Clark, David Headon and Manning Clark viewing rock art at Ubirr in  
1987**

Teaching commenced again at the end of July. My subjects for the semester were on Europe from the French Revolution to 1870 and Australia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (which ran for the full year). Alan Powell gave an excellent public lecture, later published, on 'In Search of a True Territorian'. He defined Territorians as those who continued to have some hope in the Territory's future in spite of all the setbacks.

I joined Alan and others during the first weekend in August on a Historical Society trip to the Daly River area southwest of Darwin. Our guide for the day was Peter Polishuk, member of a prominent local farming family. We saw some of the rich agricultural country close to the river and visited the former Daly River copper mine and graves. Mining commenced there in 1884 and continued sporadically until the early twentieth century. There were quite extensive machinery relics. The mine was in the vicinity of an Aboriginal attack on Europeans and a horrible massacre of Aboriginal people that followed it. Another interesting Historical Society day trip during September was to the remains of the former leprosarium at Channel Island.



**The former Daly River copper mine in 1987**



**Christine Pittman at Channel Island in 1987**

A letter to my parents of 16 August 1987 describes a not unusual week:

*I lectured on the history of Australian art and architecture and urbanisation in Australia and also on the French Revolution. I had tutorials on the immediate causes of the French Revolution. I continued work on editing Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography entries. On Wednesday night I chaired a Historical Society Council meeting. Part of Thursday night was spent attending a meeting on a possible sister city relationship between Darwin and a city in Indonesia. On Friday morning I went to a meeting at Darwin Institute of Technology concerned with a possible book of readings on northern Australian studies. I then had a meeting at the University College on the Dictionary of Biography. Late in the afternoon I started attending a National Trust Council meeting that finished this afternoon [two days later]. The meeting went reasonably well and it was good seeing Councillors from various parts of the Territory. Last night we had a pleasant barbecue that the Trust's Darwin Branch organised at East Point.*

A week later I helped look after Barry Smith, a highly regarded historian from

The Australian National University. He lectured my first year students on public health during the Industrial Revolution and gave an excellent public lecture at the College on the Irish influence in Australian intellectual life.

Two more visitors whom I looked after in September were John Moses, Head of the Department of History at The University of Queensland, and George Shaw, one of his senior colleagues. They were mainly in Darwin to assist with the selection of a new Lecturer in History at the College to work with Alan Powell, Paul Webb and me. We offered the job to Christine Doran, who accepted it. A promising young historian from James Cook University, she was well published and able to teach both Australian and Southeast Asian history, versatility we sought. A quiet achiever, she proved a hard working and capable colleague who in 2015 was still employed at Charles Darwin University.

I acquired my first doctoral student in late September. Julie Wells was an Honours graduate in History from The University of Melbourne and had been a secondary school teacher. She went on to write an important and well-received study on assimilation policy and practice in Darwin between 1939 and 1967. She was an enterprising researcher with impressive conceptual abilities.

The rest of the year seemed to speed by rapidly. I taught, marked assignments, gave and attended public talks (including the Historical Society's monthly speakers), visited local historical sites, did some research and writing, acted as Dean while Alan was overseas, interviewed prospective students, and spent a lot of time with my Historical Society and National Trust involvements. During October I was in Alice Springs to supervise the College's 'summer school' for secondary students there. The College published my long occasional paper on Ian Tuxworth's period as Territory Chief Minister, which led to a joint ABC radio interview with Ian and me. I naturally felt my approach was critical but fair. Ian, not surprisingly, disagreed. In mid December I was part of a selection committee to choose a research officer for a register of significant Territory women between 1948 and 1988. The successful applicant was Theresa (later Tess) Lea, an impressive young Darwin-born and bred Australian National University Women's Studies student who became one of the Territory's leading public intellectuals. Ann McGrath was back in Darwin at the same time to promote her important new book

*Born in the Cattle: Aborigines in Cattle Country*, which dealt with Aborigines in the Territory's cattle industry until the Second World War. I organised for her to give a public lecture at the College and also attended the function at which Peter Loveday launched the book. I then joined her for dinner with two other Territory-based historians, Lyn Riddett and Tim Rowse.

I returned to Darwin in early February 1988 after a long stay with my parents in Sydney, where I attended the Australian Historical Association's conference at The University of Sydney to mark the bicentenary of European settlement in Australia. After clearing the mould and mildew from my apartment, one of my first tasks on getting back was to work with other Historical Society members on a book about the Northern Territory in 1888. It was inspired by the 'slice approach' adopted for the multi volumed *Australians: A Historical Library* project. I also chaired a long Academic Board meeting that focussed on the Commonwealth's green paper on higher education, an important component of the 'Dawkins Revolution' (named after Commonwealth Education Minister John Dawkins) that led the conversion of colleges of advanced education into universities and amalgamations between some institutions. The prospect of an amalgamation between the College the Darwin Institute of Technology was discussed. I felt it made sense but needed careful handling. The College's enrolments looked pretty healthy, with over a hundred students in History subjects.

The new semester started at the end of February. I was responsible for a first year subject on Australian history and a yearlong new subject on North Australia. Both subjects had a thematic structure with detailed attention to selected topics. The North Australian subject included major research essays based on primary sources, and excursions to historic places, the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, libraries and archives. I also had my first Honours/Master's Qualifying students in a subject on History and cultural resources in Australia and supervised Honours/Master's Qualifying theses. I was increasingly occupied as President of the Academic Board with discussions on the likely amalgamation between the College and the Darwin Institute of Technology. I attended many meetings of the working group considering the educational profile of amalgamated institution. In mid March there was a weekend National Trust Council meeting in Katherine that included the official opening as a Bicentennial project

of the restored Trust property O’Keeffe House, a marvellous corrugated iron residence built as a mess during the Second World War and later the home of a well known local couple. One of the more interesting visitors I met in Darwin was the Canberra photographer Heide Smith, a friend of the Clarks. We discussed the book she was planning on the Tiwi people of Bathurst and Melville Islands.



### **National Trust Councillor Kate Holmes at O’Keeffe House in 1988**

The Historical Society organised its Easter 1988 field trip to Mallapunyah Springs. I drove my own car with Christine Pittman as my travelling companion. There were five other vehicles. We travelled the 900 kilometres from Darwin on Good Friday before camping in a lovely shaded area in front of Fiona and Norm Darcy’s homestead. Birds were everywhere. On the next day Fiona showed us around the scattered village that comprised the homestead area. She told us about the family. On Easter Sunday Fiona and Norm took us to Kilgour Gorge, an incredibly rugged area where the Darcys lived for

several years before moving to Mallapunyah in 1928. We saw the ruins of their buildings, a copper mine they worked, and some old tracks. We returned to Darwin on the following day.



### **The original Mallapunyah Springs homestead building in 1988**

Visiting historians continued to arrive. During late April it was the turn of Campbell Macknight from The Australian National University, author of *The Voyage to Marege: Macassan Trepanners in Northern Australia*, a definitive work. He gave a fascinating public lecture on the prehistory of South Sulawesi, from where many of the Macassans came. About a month later as Acting Dean I helped host Jamie Mackie, also from The Australian National University, a Southeast Asia specialist. His public lecture was on the political background to economic growth in Southeast Asia.

In mid June I flew with other National Trust Councillors for the official opening by Chief Minister Hatton of the restored early twentieth century Timber Creek Police Station. Australian Bicentennial Authority funds made the restoration possible. The building now housed a museum. The ceremony went well in spite of Chief Minister

Hatton's confused speech, which I later learned was because he put his speaking cards in the wrong order. There was a large attendance for such a remote location. Among those present were former policemen who had served in Timber Creek and local pastoralists such as Reg Durack.



**People associated with the police presence in Timber Creek at the opening of the restored original police station there in 1988**

During the semester break in late June I had my Rockhampton friends Grahame and Helen Griffin and their sons Patrick and Hugh to stay. Grahame was a Media Studies academic with interests in History while Helen was a former undergraduate student of mine who later completed a Master's degree in History. We went on a camping trip to Kakadu National Park, Katherine Gorge and Douglas Hot Springs that allowed me to further explore some heritage sites in these areas by both vehicle and on foot. We also visited Katherine, Pine Creek, Adelaide River and Batchelor. Encountering various

interpretation strategies and noticing how my visitors responded to them started me thinking about a book on cultural heritage management in the Territory, a project that I embarked on some years later.



**Grahame Griffin, Helen Griffin, Hugh Griffin and Patrick Griffin at Waterfall Creek camping area in 1988**

On my return to Darwin in July following a holiday in Sabah, Malaysia with my parents I found that Marshall Perron had staged a successful coup against Hatton and was the Territory's new Country Liberal Party Chief Minister. Many Country Liberals saw Hatton as being too liberal, especially on Aboriginal issues, but he also, as his Timber Creek speech showed, quite often struggled to cope as Chief Minister. The coup featured in my next political chronicle.

During late July I attended a meeting considering the establishment of an Aboriginal Studies centre at the College, met The Australian National University's

University Librarian and helped look after John Moses, who met my historian colleagues and me to discuss how we were going. He seemed pleased with our progress. John also gave a public lecture on promoting Germany in Australia between the early twentieth century and the late 1930s. Another public lecture I went to was by Peter Spillett on the successful re-enactment of a Macassan voyage from Indonesia to the Northern Territory earlier that year. The vessel was built along traditional lines in the Indonesian city of Ujung Pandang (now Makassar). Except for Peter it had an Indonesian crew. It became a permanent exhibit at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. Teaching resumed with classes for my subject on Europe between 1789 and 1870 and North Australia. I also took a National Trust group from New South Wales on a guided tour of Darwin.

The second semester was full of the by now usual activities associated with teaching, research and writing, administration and Historical Society and National Trust commitments. During late August I attended the Terra Australis to Australia conference in Sydney and Canberra that commemorated the bicentenary. Amalgamation of tertiary education institutions in Darwin came closer when David Caro, previously Vice-Chancellor of The University of Melbourne, was appointed Interim Vice-Chancellor of the new Northern Territory University that was scheduled to come into being at the start of 1989. As President of the College Academic Board, I was a member of the Interim Council. Jim Thomson was confirmed as the new institution's Deputy Vice-Chancellor and, to my relief, Alan Powell as its Dean of the Faculty of Arts. In mid November I visited The University of Queensland to consult with historians there and present a seminar paper on the history of the Tennant Creek gold rush.

In spite of the looming amalgamation, I was pleased to have worked at the University College. It was a well-funded and administered institution where History and historians were valued and encouraged. The University of Queensland's support played a vital role in ensuring that this occurred. The students were, for the most part, able. Like many of my colleagues, I had concerns about how the amalgamation would proceed but did my best to view it positively. I enjoyed living in Darwin and was happy to stay if the new university proved a satisfying environment for me.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### NORTHERN TERRITORY UNIVERSITY 1989-1995

Northern Territory University was officially born on 1 January 1989. It provided a growing variety of academic programs from TAFE certificates to doctorates to an increasing number of students. History at the new university was until 1995 part of a school within the Faculty of Arts. Lyn Riddett, a well-qualified historian at Darwin Institute of Technology and a North Australian specialist, joined the former University College historians Christine Doran, Alan Powell, Paul Webb and me. By this stage My-Van Tran had moved to Adelaide, where she later became an Associate Professor at University of South Australia (Fred Robins was employed at The University of Adelaide). Robyn Maynard, previously Alan Powell's research assistant, also became a half time member of the History group (the other half of her work was in Sociology). University of Queensland subjects were phased out and replaced by those of the new university but the focus remained on Australia, modern Europe, North Australia and Southeast Asia. After Alan finished as Dean in 1992 he taught ancient Greek and Roman history. Ray Nyland, an ancient history specialist who was in charge of the residential college, later taught in that area. Historians Tony Austin, Michael Christie and Suzanne Saunders and the historical geographer Jim Cameron were on the staff of the Faculty of Education, which offered history of education subjects. All except Robyn had doctorates. Two of the political scientists, Alistair Heatley and Dennis Shoesmith, had doctorates in History and did some historical work. History was one of the university's strongest research disciplines with good Honours and postgraduate enrolments and an outstanding record of success in the supervision of research degree students. Most staff and postgraduate research was on the Northern Territory and Southeast Asia. University historians were also active in relevant community and professional organisations. History staff members produced numerous publications including books and refereed journal articles. They also received various grants. The annual History Colloquium, inaugurated by Lyn Riddett and later jointly organised with the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, became a well-attended event in Darwin's cultural calendar. Suzanne Saunders edited the refereed *Journal of Territory History* that started in 1990.



**Paul Webb, Christine Doran and Robyn Maynard at Northern Territory University in 1992, and Lyn Riddett at the State Reference Library of the Northern Territory in 1993**

The Historical Society of the Northern Territory, of which I was President until 1990 and Secretary after then, also made significant contributions. During the late 1980s several 'new faces' joined the Society's Council, including professional historians. Two particularly able and energetic members, Baiba Berzins, the Principal Archivist at the Northern Territory Archives and a former Mitchell Librarian, and her husband Peter Loveday inaugurated a new book publications program. It resulted in substantial profits that supported further publications. Monthly lectures were organised around themes and energetically publicised. In 1992, for example, the theme was 'Australia's Northern War 1942-1945' and in 1993 it was 'Territory People'. Audiences were mostly excellent. Weekend field trips took members and others to some of the Territory's historically interesting areas.

My role at did not initially change much from what I had done at the University College. First at Myilly Point and later at Casuarina, once my office was moved there, I taught Australian, North Australian and modern European history, supervised research degree, Graduate Diploma and Honours students and chaired and served on various Faculty and university boards and committees. I was an Associate Professor from 1991 and became a Professor at the beginning of 1996. My publications included books, occasional papers, contributions to books, journal articles, political chronicles, other periodical and newspaper articles, entries in reference works, book and exhibition

reviews and booklets on National Trust properties. Both individually and jointly I received grants. In addition to the Historical Society, I was involved in other community and professional organisations and on advisory boards. The most important were the National Trust of Australia (Northern Territory), of which I was President from 1991 to 1993, and the Federation of Australian Historical Societies.

On 28 April 1989 I was at the new university's official opening. Territory Minister for Education Tom Harris referred to the long battle to provide Territory residents with a local university. Chancellor Austin Asche argued that Territorians no longer needed to send their children elsewhere for a university education. Newly appointed Vice-Chancellor Malcolm Nairn also spoke, highlighting the advantages of an institution that taught at a range of different levels.



**The author (far right) with June Kane at Northern Territory University's opening in 1989**

Other events during the first half of 1989 provided some variety for me. In early February I attended Administrator Eric Johnston's launch of the Historical Society's *Looking Back: The Northern Territory in 1888*, to which I contributed a couple of chapters. The engaging young ABC cadet journalist covering the event was Barbara (later Malarndirri) McCarthy, who subsequently became prominent in the Territory's media and politics. The start of teaching saw about 70 students enrolled in the subjects I offered. The final University College graduation ceremony also occurred. There were the now customary trips to parts of the Territory's Top End, including my first with Suzanne Saunders and two other friends, Jim and Mary Dorling, to the picturesque Reynolds River area. In early June the historian Sandy Yarwood, formerly of The University of New England, visited the university and presented seminar on the history of the horse trade between India and Australia, the subject of his next book. Another interesting and rather unexpected address that month occurred when Alec Fong Lim, the normally mid-mannered politically conservative Lord Mayor of Darwin and from a long established ethnic local Chinese family, was a Historical Society speaker. His topic was Darwin between 1946 and 1960. In response to a well-meaning but naïve comment from the audience about the lack of anti-Chinese feelings in Darwin during the period, Alec quite angrily responded by referring to the discrimination that his family and others in the Chinese community experienced. I later wrote an entry on him for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Also in June I had a long chat at a Government House reception with the actor David Gulpilil about Aboriginal history in the part of Arnhem Land from which he came. At about the same time we were fortunate to have one of Australia's most eminent historians, Geoffrey Blainey from The University of Melbourne, speak at a university seminar I organised on writing History. I met him later in the day to discuss the university's History program.

In April 1989 the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory invited the university to compile a heritage resources inventory of the Mary River Crossing, Point Stuart and Wildman River reserves, all to the east of Darwin. On the university's behalf I undertook this in collaboration with students Eve Gibson and Barbara McLaren, for whom their work on the project became part of the assessment for the Graduate Diploma/Honours subject on History and cultural resources that I taught. We produced

our report, based on research of primary sources and extensive fieldwork, later in the year. It also resulted in a conference paper and a few journal articles. The report covered Aboriginal and European histories of the reserves and the identification of places of heritage significance. Key themes that we identified were Aboriginal occupation, European exploration and the buffalo industry, in which both Aborigines and Europeans were closely involved. We were able for the first time to accurately identify the explorer John McDouall Stuart's route from the Mary River to the coast at Point Stuart in 1862, which in places differed quite significantly from that in his journals. We also found that like many European explorers of his era, he often lacked the language to properly describe what he saw. Our work acknowledged, however, his extraordinary skills as a bushman and the significance of his successful journey, the first from South Australia to the Northern Territory coast and back again. Our recommendations regarding trails linking heritage places were later partly implemented.



**The author at Point Stuart in 1989**

In early June I flew to Cairns, where I was well looked after by my former colleague Glenn Ross and his wife Carmel. Glenn had moved from Darwin to James Cook University's new Cairns campus, where he was doing more research on cultural heritage tourism in North Australia to follow on from that we had jointly conducted on Fannie Bay Gaol. We had some useful discussions. I then flew on to Townsville for the Australian Historical Association conference at James Cook University. Sessions on mining history took place at the historic mining town of Ravenswood. I gave a paper there on the Tennant Creek gold rush that seemed well received. Geoffrey Bolton of The University of Queensland gave a wonderful after dinner address in honour of Brian Dalton, who was retiring from James Cook University after establishing his department as a leader in research and teaching on areas such as Aboriginal history, regional history and mining history. Before returning to Darwin I spent a day in Charters Towers, another historic mining town, where I took slides to be used in teaching. Not long after getting home I went to Tennant Creek for a few days for further research there in the Tuxworth-Fullwood Archives.

The second semester commenced at the beginning of August. At the end of the first teaching week Alan Powell and I made a quick trip to the Roper River area. Checking *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography* entries occupied quite a lot of time. There was an interesting Legislative Assembly by election in mid August in which the Country Liberal Party lost the Wanguri electorate that it had held for many years. At my invitation Geoffrey Bolton visited the university at the end of the month. He really worked hard, giving characteristically eloquent talks on Australian environmental history, federal-state relations in Australia and North Australian historiography. He unfortunately got caught up in the domestic pilots' strike that had just started and had to travel to Perth by bus.

At the end of August I flew to London, where I stayed for a week and used as a base to visit places where the British Industrial Revolution was being interpreted. These included Ironbridge Gorge, often regarded as the Industrial Revolution's birthplace, the Merseyside Maritime Museum in Liverpool and the Rhondda Heritage Park in south Wales. I took many colour slides and collected lots of written materials that I used after I returned to Darwin for teaching and public lectures.

In early September I travelled from London to Bochum in West Germany, where I attended the superbly organised and lavishly funded International Mining History Congress at the German Mining Museum. My paper on ‘Mining, Race and Politics on the North Australian Frontier: The Tennant Creek Gold Rush’ was later included in the book based on the conference. The American mining historian David F. Crew wrote in it as a rapporteur that in ‘frontier’ regions such as the American West, Alaska or Australia:

*ethnic divisions and conflicts reflected a certain community of interests shared by white employers and white workers. David Carment’s very interesting paper on Tennant Creek shows, for example, that the white employers and workers who moved there in the 1930s jointly insisted that the government remove native peoples who stood in the way of the “development” of this region.*<sup>11</sup>

I later pursued these points further. In addition to attending conference sessions, I visited the nearby historic coal mining area of Witthern, where I again took slides and gathered whatever written information I could find.

I was back in Darwin again during mid semester to resume the usual activities for the remainder of the year. There was a short trip to Katherine with Suzanne Saunders, who was doing research there. We went on another trip together in November to Cooina in Kakadu National Park to do the Yellow Water boat cruise. Never before had I seen so many birds and crocodiles there. At a nearby billabong on the way home we viewed thousands of migrating magpie geese.

A longer excursion was to the Victoria River District, about which Graeme Davison from Monash University asked me to write a chapter for a book he was editing, *Journeys into History: Australia’s Foremost History Writers Reflect on the Landscapes of Our Past*, that appeared in 1990. My chapter took readers on a vehicle journey to some of the district’s historic places. I needed to ensure that the journey was feasible and the places I chose were accessible. I comprehensively photographed them all. With me on the trip were Alan Powell and Suzanne Saunders. We travelled in a four-wheel drive vehicle.

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<sup>11</sup> David F. Crew, ‘Rapport / Bericht’, in Klaus Tenfelde (ed), *Sozialgeschichte des Bergbaus im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert / Towards a Social History of Mining in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Verlag C.H. Beck, Munchen, 1992, p 56.

After stopping at Timber Creek, we went to Jasper Gorge. There we camped for the next two nights. In spite of temperatures of more than 40 degrees, Alan and I climbed and walked for hours through the rugged and extraordinarily picturesque country around the gorge. In my chapter I explained how this was a place of much importance to Aboriginal people, a vital communications link for the Victoria River District's early white settlers and where armed conflict occurred between Aborigines and Europeans. Augustus Gregory's exploring expedition also visited the gorge. Thomas Baines, the noted artist who accompanied the expedition, illustrated it. On our return to the camp we swam in a nearby cool and clear natural pool dwarfed by towering red cliffs and palm trees. For our entire period at the gorge we saw only a few passing vehicles on the rough dirt road that ran through it. It was an idyllic couple of days but the ghosts of the violent past often seemed to be present. We returned to Darwin via Victoria River Downs, where I again took photographs.



**Alan Powell and Suzanne Saunders at Jasper Gorge in 1989**

After returning from leave in Sydney, in late January 1990 I became closely involved in the campaign for effective Northern Territory heritage legislation. On 22 January I spoke at a well-attended North Australia Research Unit seminar on the Territory government's draft *Heritage Conservation Bill*. Like other speakers that day and many of the submissions that were received, I criticised the Bill as being too weak. Both as an academic historian and a National Trust Councillor I participated in various further meetings and discussion on the proposed legislation that helped result in a stronger act that was passed in the following year. Other academic and professional historians, including Tony Austin, Barbara James and Suzanne Saunders, also contributed. My 1991 article on Territory heritage legislation in the journal *Australian Historical Studies* emphasised historians' crucial roles.

Until teaching started, I was mainly kept occupied in preparing for the year ahead, including seeing prospective students. The semester commenced with almost 200 History enrolments. My able doctoral student Mickey Dewar, doing innovative work on the Northern Territory in Australian writing, took some of the first year Australian history tutorial groups for me. Peter Loveday gave a seminar in early March on writing the Territory's political history. Later published, it was a useful resource for me. In early March I attended a National Trust Council meeting in Alice Springs. Included in the program was a visit to Hermannsburg mission. I followed the March federal elections in the Northern Territory, about which I wrote in a political chronicle, with interest, as I knew and liked the Country Liberal candidate Helen Galton. I was not, however, surprised when the sitting Australian Labor Party member Warren Snowdon defeated her in the Territory's single and very marginal House of Representatives electorate. His much greater political experience showed during the campaign. A visitor to the university about this time (a short gap in my letters prevents me from giving a more exact date) was Murdoch University's Bob Reece, who gave seminars on his Australian and Southeast Asian research.

During early April I was in Adelaide, where I participated in the well-organised International Council on Monuments and Sites conference on cultural heritage tourism. I presented a jointly authored paper with Eve Gibson on strategies for cultural heritage tourism at Point Stuart that received an encouraging response. A longer version was

published later that year in the journal *Historic Environment*. Conference attendees came from a wide range of disciplines. I found some of the more theoretical papers especially useful. While in Adelaide I stayed with My-Van Tran and Fred Robins, with whom it was great to catch up.



**The author presenting his paper at the Adelaide International Council on  
Monuments and Sites conference in 1991**

Following the end of the first semester Alan Powell, his daughter Myf, Suzanne Saunders and I travelled to Broome and back in a four wheel-drive vehicle. On the way there we took the very beautiful Gibb River Road. We camped out each night. While most of our time was in Western Australia, the journey reinforced the argument I

presented to my North Australian history students that there were more historical similarities than differences between the Victoria River District and Western Australia's northwest. As always, I was interested in the interpretation of historic places. I took many slides to be used in teaching.

On my return home, there was the now normal influx of historians visiting Darwin in the lovely Dry Season weather. They included my Brisbane friends John and Ruth Kerr, and Arch Grant, a retired Uniting Church minister who was in Darwin to launch his valuable book on the history of Methodism and Presbyterianism in the Territory and give a public lecture that I organised. Arch stayed with me. I took him on a car trip to Kakadu National Park. Although living for long periods in the Territory, he had never been there. At the end of June I organised and guided a Historical Society excursion to historic sites in and around Katherine.

During the second half of 1990 I was on study leave. Part of my leave was in Darwin and part interstate. The main purpose was to do further work on *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography* entries and the Tennant Creek gold rush, and a biography of John George Knight. The latter was a remarkable figure who held various government positions in Darwin (then Palmerston) during the second half of the nineteenth century. He was the architect of significant buildings such as the former town hall and was briefly before his death the Government Resident. This was a joint project with Barbara James and another able local historian and friend Helen Wilson, an outstanding researcher who knew the relevant archival records well. The Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory funded our research. It ultimately resulted in a report to the Commission and a book, both of which I jointly authored with Barbara and Helen. I also wrote a *Journal of Northern Territory History* article on Knight's career before he came to the Territory.

In mid July I joined my economist colleague Danny Kane, his wife June, who lectured in Journalism at the university, and their visiting daughter Elizabeth, on perhaps the most useful of the many road trips I made to the Katherine area. It was their first. We stopped at Edith Falls on the way before staying two nights at Springvale Homestead, a tourist resort that included remains of the original stone structure that the pastoralist Alfred Giles constructed in 1879. Although I had been there before, I was able to spend

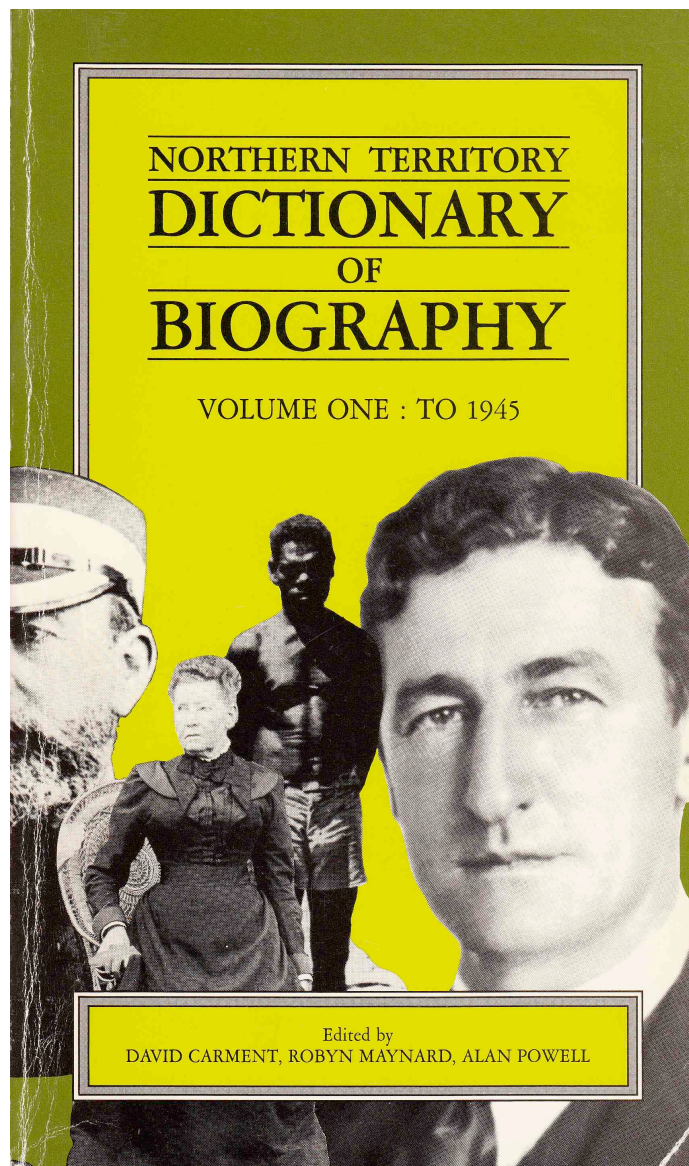
more time looking around than previously. We did an all day tour of Katherine Gorge. For the first time in my experience, our principal guide was a traditional owner of the gorge, a local Jawoyn man. He told wonderful stories of Aboriginal occupation at the gorge and provided expert commentary on the rock art. The weather was perfect. On our trip home I took the Kanes to the Adelaide River War Cemetery, where we inspected the individual graves and discussed the Second World War's impact on the Northern Territory.



**The author at Adelaide River War Cemetery in 1990**

I was back in Kakadu National Park during early August with my visiting English friends Ian, Gillian and Robert Hamill. Ian was a History postgraduate student at The Australian National University at the same time I was. They arrived in Darwin on the

coldest day I had yet experienced there, with the morning temperature in some suburbs going down to 11 degrees. At a National Trust Council meeting in Pine Creek in mid-August I was elected to chair the Executive Committee. We visited local sites, some of which were threatened by new mining developments. The Administrator of the Northern Territory Jim Muirhead launched the first volume of the *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography*, co-edited by Robyn Maynard, Alan Powell and me and published by the new Northern Territory University Press, at a well-attended ceremony in late August. It covered the period until 1945. I contributed many entries to it. Shortly after then I took the Hamills to Litchfield National Park near Batchelor.



I had an intriguing experience in mid September when James Goldrick, a Royal Australian Navy Lieutenant Commander based in Darwin with whom I was friendly and a well-published naval historian, showed me over the patrol boat he commanded, HMAS *Cessnock*. He had just returned from a long voyage in the southwest Pacific. The boat was very compact so its crew lived in crowded conditions. The patrol boat base was most elaborate. Boats were refitted indoors in a huge building. James told me much I did not know about the history of Darwin based patrol boat operations. He later went on to become a Rear Admiral and published further works on naval history.

Not long afterwards I set off by car on my long journey south, where I spent the remainder of my study leave. Part of the journey took me through the Territory's Barkly Tableland, my first visit there since 1981. I was impressed by the fact that just when I thought the completely flat and largely treeless landscape never altered as I drove along the highway there was an unexpected change. I stopped in the Queensland town of Cloncurry to inspect the museum there on John Flynn's North Australian activities. I also visited the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame at Longreach that included Northern Territory content. I went on to Brisbane via Rockhampton, where I enjoyed seeing old friends. In Brisbane I attended the Australian Historical Association conference at The University of Queensland. I presented a paper there, later published as a *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* article, on how the explorer Stuart interpreted the landscapes he saw as he made the final stage of his journey to Point Stuart. From Brisbane I drove on to Sydney. I was based at my parents' Mosman home until early in the following year but also went to Canberra and Melbourne for research in archives and libraries. Manning and Dymphna Clark invited me to an enjoyable dinner at their Canberra home at which some of Dymphna's European relatives were also present. It was, sadly, the last time I saw Manning before his death in May 1991. Using the material that Barbara James and Helen Wilson collected in addition to my own research findings, I completed a first draft of the report on Knight.

My journey home in January 1991 was via South Australia. I stayed in Adelaide with My-Van Tran and her son Douglas Robins (Fred Robins was away), taking the opportunity to visit museums that dealt with aspects of South Australia's administration

of the Northern Territory, including Old Parliament House, the Museum of Migration and Settlement and the Telecom Museum, which was good on the Overland Telegraph Line. After leaving Adelaide I drove to Darwin with stops at Coober Pedy, Alice Springs and Katherine. I planned to also stop at Daly Waters, south of Katherine, but the heavy rain meant that swollen creeks were spilling across the Stuart Highway so I decided to press on before I became stranded. I had scary moments when the water on the road was so deep that it came through the car doors and the rain was so torrential that I very limited visibility.

Once back in Darwin I was quickly into preparations for the new semester. I also with some colleagues started serious planning for the Australian Historical Association conference in Darwin that I was convening in June. There were more than 200 History enrolments at the university. At the end of February I attended a Historical Society talk in which my friend Brian Reid, who subsequently had a prominent role in community and professional history and heritage organisations, spoke about his experiences as a flying doctor in the Northern Territory. In late March I gave talks about Territory history to the many interstate students at the university's residential college and a group of people training as bilingual tourist guides. David Headon was in Darwin again during early April for the launch his *North of the Ten Commandments: A Collection of Northern Territory Literature* and stayed with me. Later that month I became involved in successful protests that prevented the Territory government from closing the State Reference Library. The government sensibly realised that it was a short-sighted idea. There is a gap of about a month in the letters to my parents between late April and late May due, I suspect, to their overseas trip then. My recollection is that the rest of the semester was occupied with the usual activities with increasing time being devoted to conference organisation.

Following the semester's end, in early May Alan Powell and I commenced perhaps the most interesting and useful of the Territory expeditions we made together. I described it in some detail in letters to my parents.

8 June 1991

*We had an uneventful drive to Tennant Creek...We dined at the excellent Dolly Pot*

*restaurant, where I was able to catch up with Michael Hester. On Wednesday morning we met Hilda Tuxworth to discuss a book she has written on the history of Helen Springs Station. We then drove on to Alice Springs. In the evening we dined at a really first rate Italian restaurant with Wes Whitmore, the Assistant Secretary in the Department of Education responsible for all schools in Central Australia. Yesterday and today were spent at a careers expo at Sadadeen High School, where the university has a stand. Alan and I took it in turns to represent the Arts Faculty there.*

15 May 1991

*After writing last Saturday I went to a pleasant dinner at the home of Dick Kimber, an Alice Springs historian, and his wife Margaret [Friedel], a research scientist with CSIRO. On Sunday morning we left Alice Springs along the Ross Highway through the beautiful East MacDonnell Ranges. We arrived at Arltunga a few hours later and spent most of the rest of the day looking around the remains of the 1880s gold rush there. These included...stone buildings, cemeteries and mines, some of which we explored...*

*On Monday we drove to Palm Valley via Hermannsburg. Camp was set up in an attractive spot near a creek bed and we then walked some distance to the end of the valley, admiring the most unusual cycad palms growing in some profusion.*

*We set off through the West MacDonnells for Redbank Gorge on Tuesday morning. En route we explored the huge Gosses Bluff, a very unusual area where a comet landed millions of years ago. Arriving at Redbank Gorge in mid-afternoon, we established camp at a site with a magnificent view over the mountains. Before dark we walked as far as was possible down the gorge. Its red rock walls are particularly dramatic.*

*Getting up early on Wednesday morning, we climbed Mount Sonder [also Rwetyepme]. At 1380 metres it is the fourth highest mountain in the Northern Territory...it was hard work. We took over three hours to reach the summit but were rewarded with really spectacular views of the surrounding ranges. I was quite exhausted when we got back to camp. Much of the ground was covered with spinifex and sharp rocks.*



### **The author on the slopes of Mount Sonder in 1991**

*We left Redbank Gorge on Thursday morning, driving via Alice Springs to the edge of the Simpson Desert. After going over some really awful roads we reached Chambers Pillar, a huge rock formation reaching out of the desert that was discovered by Stuart and became a significant landmark for other explorers...[It was also a place of considerable importance for Aboriginal people.]*

*Yesterday we set off along the Tanami Road. We visited Yuendumu, the Aboriginal settlement...Many Aborigines who want to get away from the grog have left and set up their own outstations. Continuing on, we entered the Tanami Desert, very arid and flat but quite beautiful. We camped on one of the few hills we could find, quite close to the abandoned 1930s Granites Goldfield, which we visited. Both sunrise and sunset over the desert were superb.*



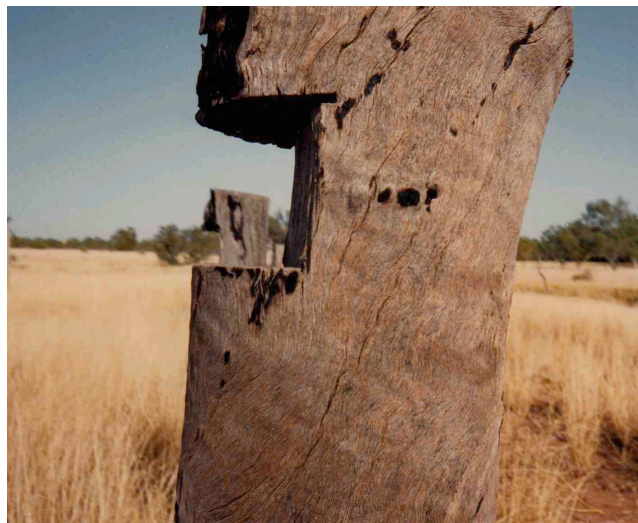
**The former Granites Goldfield with more recent mining in the background in 1991**

Our journey home was via Halls Creek and Kununurra in Western Australia and Timber Creek in the Northern Territory. Our last night was spent camped on the banks of the Victoria River, where we witnessed another amazing sunset. The trip proved invaluable for the book I was preparing on Central Australia and informed other future research projects.

The Australian Historical Association conference on the theme of ‘Outback and Sebarang’ (sebarang being the closest Indonesian word for outback) at the university seemed to go well. Over 60 people registered. There were at least 40 present at most sessions. Participants came from many different parts of Australia. Most were from universities but there were some public historians. The conference papers were all, although in varied ways, associated with the theme of frontiers in history. They dealt with concepts of frontiers, gender relations, history and place, the movement of peoples, literature and the frontier, Asian and Pacific frontiers, racial contacts in Australia and frontiers of European settlement in Australia. The keynote speakers were Ann McGrath, then at The University of New South Wales, on outback mythologies, Tony Reid of The Australian National University on early Asian impressions of Europeans and Peter Read, also of The Australian National University, on a life site in southern New South Wales. We provided various social activities, including a women’s breakfast, a dinner at the

Darwin Sailing Club, a bus tour of Darwin historic sites and a post conference day trip to Kakadu National Park. Reactions to the conference were generally positive. Anthea Hyslop of The Australian National University in her report generously described it as ‘most successful’ with a ‘stimulating programme’ and a ‘smooth and happy presentation’.<sup>12</sup> Much of the credit for this was due to the conference organising group: Christine Doran, Mickey Dewar, Suzanne Parry, Philip Raymont (Warden of the residential college), Julie Wells, Lyn Riddett and Dennis Shoesmith.

After a few weeks in Melbourne and Sydney for research and conference attendance, I returned to Darwin in late July. Shortly before the second semester started I participated in a Historical Society field trip, which Willi Pedersen organised, to the first Wave Hill Station homestead in the Victoria River District. I had never been there before and was impressed by the rolling hills and wide vistas. Camping near the Victoria River, we looked at remains of the homestead precinct in use between 1883 and 1926, the cemetery and the well-built stockyards. All were eventually abandoned due to flooding. At the small town of Kalkarindji, formerly known as Wave Hill, we visited the 1937 police station, Aboriginal ‘welfare’ huts erected in the 1950s and a former camp used by Afghans.



### **Fence post near the first Wave Hill Station homestead in 1991**

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<sup>12</sup> Anthea Hyslop, ‘Australian Historical Association Conference 1991 – Outback and Sebarang’, in *Australian Historical Association Bulletin*, no 68, September 1991, p 57.

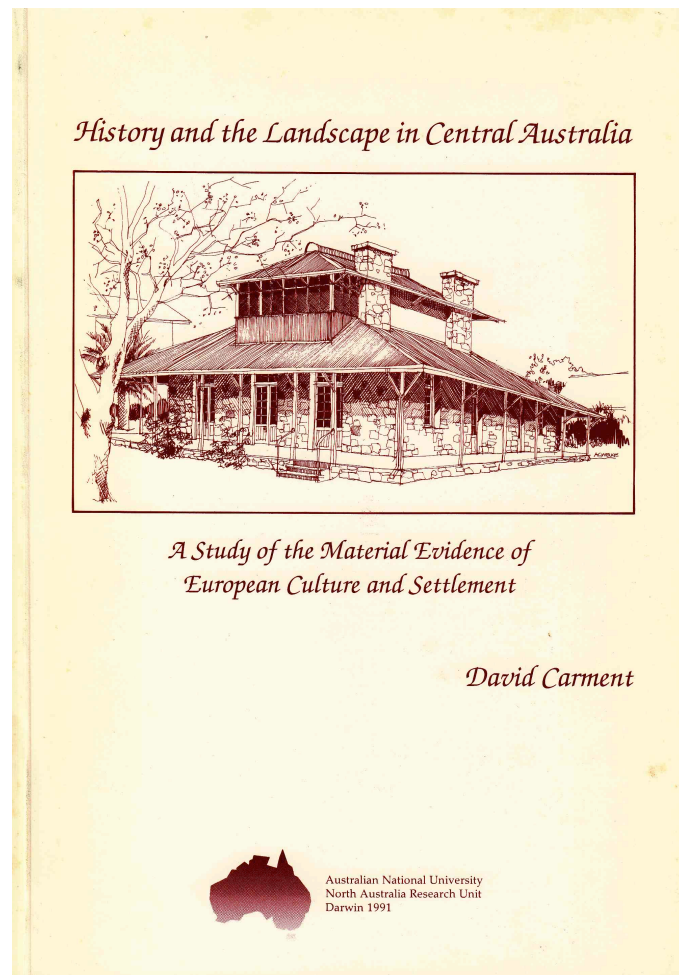
The second semester commenced with good numbers in the subjects I was teaching on Australian, North Australian and modern European history, which again meant that I received part-time teaching assistance. My classes on the Russian Revolution in late August were well timed as they coincided with dramatic events in the former Soviet Union. During early September I took my North Australian history students on an excursion to historic sites in and around Adelaide River. With some of my students I attended Sir Paul Hasluck's fascinating public lecture in Darwin in early November. He provided an account and assessment of his role as the Commonwealth minister responsible for the Territory between 1951 and 1963.

In mid August Alan Powell and I drove to the Cox Peninsula near Darwin. We camped near Harneys Beach, where the author and bushman Bill Harney once lived. On our second day we went for a long walk along beaches and reefs until we reached Point Charles Lighthouse, the Territory's oldest lighthouse built in 1893. We returned to Darwin via the Belyuen Aboriginal settlement and Bynoe Harbour. Attendance at a Federation of Australian Historical Societies meeting in Hobart during late September allowed me to see Jim Thomson and his delightful wife Diana, who retired to Hobart following Jim's retirement from Northern Territory University. At the end of the month I joined other Historical Society members on a tour of Channel Island.

My activities as National Trust President kept me busy. In addition to chairing and attending meetings, I participated in various public events. In early November, for instance, I gave a speech at an Arbor Week function in which Darwin's Lord Mayor Alan Markham unveiled plaques commemorating significant Darwin trees. My first presidential message to Trust members in November concerned the importance of cultural heritage tourism and the extent to which the Trust was already involved in it. I regretted the lack of any well developed and accepted philosophy for cultural heritage tourism in the Territory and argued that this was an area needing urgent attention. In mid November I spoke about the Territory Trust's history at a dinner to mark its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

On 12 December at the State Reference Library of the Northern Territory Austin Asche, then Chief Justice of the Northern Territory and later its Administrator, launched my short book *History and the Landscape in Central Australia: A Study of the Material*

*Evidence of European Cultural Settlement*, published by The Australian National University's North Australia Research Unit. Using a multi-disciplinary approach, the book explained how historical evidence was found in various sites artefacts and structures in Central Australia. It analysed links between the process of European settlement in the region and its contemporary cultural landscape. It also discussed how during the 1980s very different ideas emerged about the preservation and interpretation of that landscape. The book seemed well received. In a 1993 review Ross Johnston from The University of Queensland described it as a 'valuable case study illustrating the value of material culture evidence'. 'The cause of Public History', he wrote, 'is beginning to be advocated among the Australian academic circle and one of the serious proponents is David Carment... His credentials as a practitioner are superior'.<sup>13</sup>



<sup>13</sup> *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol 39, no 1, 1993, pp 95-96.

My involvement as National Trust President in commemorative events marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the 'northern war' commenced shortly after my return from holiday in mid January 1992. In early February I attended a special service at the Darwin Memorial Uniting Church, in which Arch Grant, who was staying with me, participated. Among those in attendance was the former Governor General Sir Zelman Cowen, who was a naval officer in Darwin during early 1942. A lot of those who were evacuated from Darwin just before the war with Japan started were also there. Later that month I was at the opening of a display at the university's library that focussed on the role of local nurses in 1942. Several of the nurses were present. Another visitor was the new Chairman of the Australian Council of National Trusts, the former federal Liberal minister Kevin Newman, with whom I had an enjoyable dinner. I did, though, wonder whether it was sensible to have him in this post while there was a Labor federal government in office.

On 19 February I went to the special commemoration ceremony marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Japanese air attack on Darwin. It took place on the city's historic oval overlooking the harbour. Despite the Northern Territory Government's quite frequently crude promotion of the event, much of which was designed to bring tourists to Darwin at a time of year that normally saw few visitors, it was surprisingly moving. About 10,000 people were present. I was fortunate as an official guest wearing long trousers, a long sleeved shirt and a tie to have a seat under shade, as the weather was particularly hot and humid. Speakers included Sir Zelman Cowen and Prime Minister Paul Keating. They were both most eloquent. Many former service men and women who were in Darwin when it was bombed were back for the ceremony. That evening the Historical Society commenced its 1992 lecture series on the theme of the Territory during the Second World War with Arch Grant as the speaker. He reminisced about his experiences as an army chaplain in the Territory during 1942.

The first teaching semester commenced in late February with more than 200 History enrolments and a major air conditioning failure at the university that took over a day to be fixed. The high humidity quickly resulted in all my Faculty's photocopiers ceasing to operate. After this rather chaotic start things returned to normal.

Second World War commemorative functions continued. On 22 March I drove to

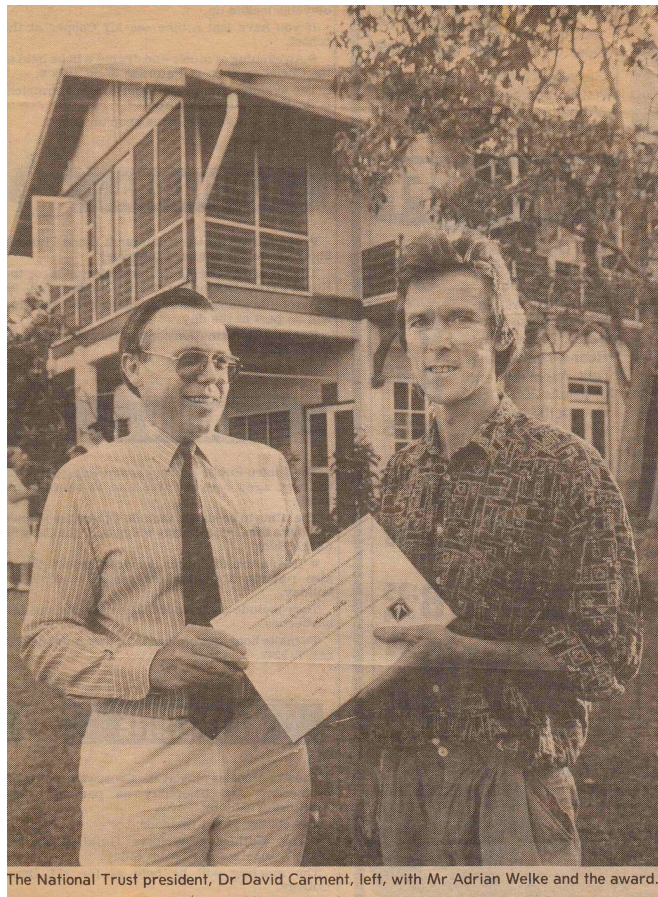
Katherine with the National Trust Director Penny Cook. There we attended the opening of a Second World War display at the former Katherine Railway Station, a Trust property. I introduced the Minister for Education Shane Stone, who performed the opening ceremony. Among the large crowd were many former service people and railway workers. The day was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the only Japanese bombing of Katherine. It still seems extraordinary that the Japanese were able to attack a town so far inland. About a month later I drove over 600 kilometres to Daly Waters, where the National Trust had restored the former aviation complex that included the Territory's oldest hangar. It was much used during the Second World War. I introduced the Territory Labor Senator and federal minister Bob Collins, who officially opened the complex after flying to Daly Waters in a chartered aircraft. Bob, with whom I had much to do during my time in the Territory, was widely liked and regarded as an able politician but committed suicide in 2007 after being charged with multiple child sex offences. He said all the right things in his speech yet remarked to me that Daly Waters was his least favourite Territory place. Despite the town's remoteness and tiny population, a big crowd turned up. A lively barbecue and bush music followed the ceremony. Other well-attended openings at which I officiated over the next couple of months included the former steam pump house at Darwin's Stokes Hill Wharf that was a Trust project and a Second World War display at the former Adelaide River Railway Station.

For a few months from May Eric Sager, a labour and maritime historian from University of Victoria in Canada, was a Visiting Fellow at Northern Territory University. He proved an admirable colleague. While at the university he made use of the Northern Territory Archives' extensive oral history collection to research and commence writing his innovative book *Discovering Darwin: The 1930s in Legend and History* that was published the following year. Eric also gave interesting presentations on political developments in Canada and the history of unemployment there. His archaeologist wife Brenda Clark and two young daughters travelled to Darwin with him and I saw quite a lot of them socially. They made the most of their time in the Territory, travelling widely within it and visiting Bali.

Following the end of teaching in early June Alan Powell and I made a trip through the Gulf region in north Queensland, during which I took slides to be used in teaching

and considered the possibility of writing something about the region's historic sites. I gave a seminar paper on the topic later in the year but decided not to pursue it any further. It seemed too open ended for me to handle. While most of our time was spent outside the Northern Territory, the trip provided the opportunity to travel along the historically significant dirt track between Borroloola and Wollongorang for the first time.

I was pleased in late June to officiate at a function during which the Territory's Administrator Jim Muirhead presented Honorary Life Membership of the National Trust to the architect Adrian Welke, a founder of and a partner in the nationally well-known Troppo Architects. I pointed out that Adrian had provided the Trust with much free architectural advice for more than a decade, worked hard to document the Territory's architectural history and took a leading role in saving the Myilly Point precinct. I later wrote about Troppo Architects' powerful impact on Territory architecture.



*Northern Territory News, 29 June 1992*

In early July I accompanied Sue Harlow, an Honours student under my supervision who later became a friend, to the former Maranboy tin mining field near Katherine, about which she was writing her thesis. We had a wonderful day there inspecting various historic sites going back to the early twentieth century. They included a stamp battery, a hospital, mines and a cemetery. A revised version of her thesis, *Tin Gods: A Social History of the Men and Women of Maranboy 1913-1962*, was published as a book in 1997.

Another interesting journey occurred at the beginning of August. As part of a Historical Society field trip, I spent a long weekend exploring the South Alligator Valley. After setting up camp at Kambogle, where we were surrounded by mountains and situated beside a creek, under Leith Barter's expert guidance we inspected an old homestead and stockyards, some disused uranium mines and Aboriginal rock art galleries. We also made the steep climb to the top of UDP Falls (now Gunlom) and swam in the cool rock pools.



**The former El Sherana uranium mine in 1992**

I flew to Alice Springs at the end of August to chair a National Trust Council meeting there. Before the meeting I spent time with David Hugo, one of my doctoral students who was working on a history of Italians at the Harts Range mica-mining field

in Central Australia. He was also in charge of the Strehlow Research Centre so in addition to discussing his thesis he gave me a guided tour of the centre that was built to commemorate the work of the controversial anthropologist and linguist T.G.H. Strehlow. The Trust meeting seemed to get through a lot of business. Much of this was concerned with the organisation's growing portfolio of properties, many of which were in remote locations. One of the most recent acquisitions, a house in Alice Springs' Hartley Street, was inspected during our meeting.

Another historian to visit the university in 1992 was Jill Roe from Macquarie University, who came in early September. We later worked together closely in the Australian Historical Association and the History Council of New South Wales. In Darwin to see her niece Rennison Robb, she kindly gave two seminars. One was on the world of Miles Franklin, whose biography she was writing. The other was on new ways of interpreting the history of Australian federation. She came to dinner at my home and also joined some colleagues and me for a restaurant meal. In addition to becoming a valued friend, Jill was a generous mentor.

Also in early September Alan Powell, Fiona Darcy and I made a quick trip to Tennant Creek for the launch of Hilda Tuxworth's book *Helen Springs Station*, which the university helped publish. The crowded ceremony took place in the town's council chambers and was followed by a dinner hosted by Ian Tuxworth in the excellent Dolly Pot restaurant.

I travelled with Alan again in late September when we drove to the Cobourg Peninsula after receiving the necessary permission from the Aboriginal owners. Our journey, mainly on dirt tracks in northern Arnhem Land, took us through country that included unusual rock formations and dense rain forest. After driving about 700 kilometres, we reached the ranger station at Black Point in Gurig National Park. There we stayed for a week in a comfortable demountable building. Each night I read early accounts of the area. Making use of a university boat, we visited the remains of Victoria Settlement to see the recently developed conservation work and interpretive facilities. We caught many fish while we were at the peninsula. Its harbour, Port Essington, impressed me even more than when I first saw it some years earlier. Early European observers rightly noted its picturesque headlands, beaches and coral reefs.



### **Former Macassan well at Cobourg Peninsula in 1992**

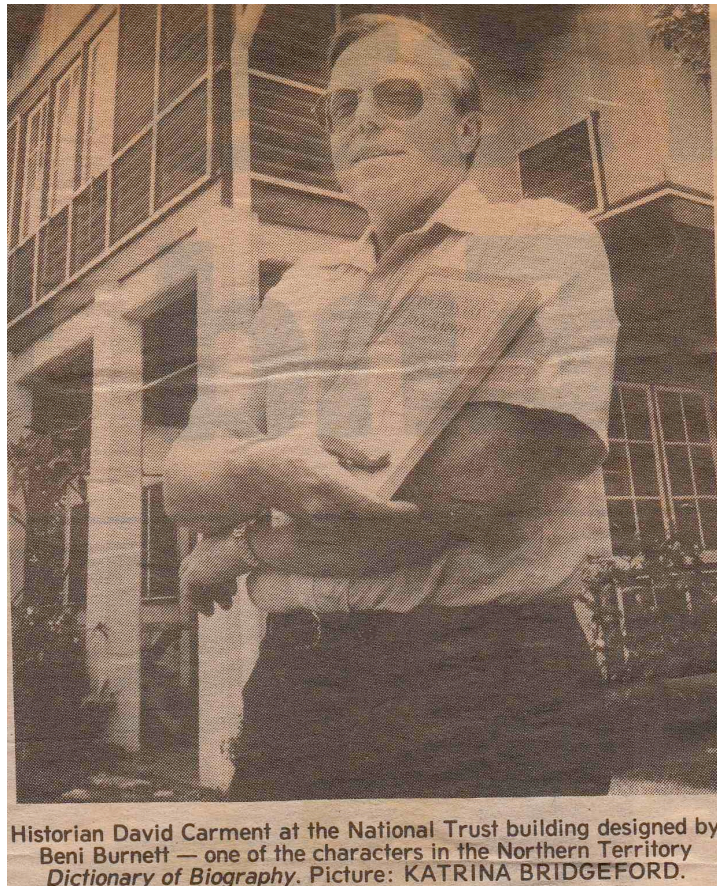
During late September and early October I was in Canberra for a Federation of Australian Historical Societies meeting and the well organised Australian Historical Association conference at The Australian National University, at which I contributed to a panel discussion on the role of historical societies. I also attended a Heads of History meeting that included lively discussions on various issues and problems. The only disconcerting note came from a Monash University participant who made it plain that he did not like the post 1988 universities being represented at such meetings. I caught up with various friends, including the Headons, in Canberra.

Shortly after my return I joined some of my colleagues in a dinner with Bill Bunbury, who presented 'Talking History' and other social history programs on ABC Radio National. I did the first of what was to be many radio interviews with him. We got on well and usually had a meal together on his quite regular Darwin visits in the years that followed.

There was a rush of activities following the end of teaching in early November. I marked the usual student assignments and examination papers, worked on page proofs for the second volume on the *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography*, attended meetings, read thesis drafts and was at the launch by Jim Muirhead of Mickey Dewar's book *The 'Black War' in Arnhem Land: Missionaries and the Yolngu 1908-1940*. In mid November I was at a well-attended function during which I spoke to thank Alan Powell

for his excellent work as Dean. He finished his term at the end of the year and, sadly for the Faculty, did not seek to have it renewed.

The most important event for me after returning to work in mid January was Northern Territory University Press's publication of the *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography*'s second volume that Barbara James and I co-edited and to which many others and we contributed entries. Its focus was on the period between 1945 and 1978. Barbara and I both did as much media work as we could, including newspaper, television and radio interviews. The volume sold well and was reprinted. Campbell Macknight wrote in his 1993 review that it 'obviously deserves a place on the shelf besides its predecessor in any reference library concerned with Australia. The problem with reviewing it is to stop reading it... What we have to date is a major contribution'.<sup>14</sup>



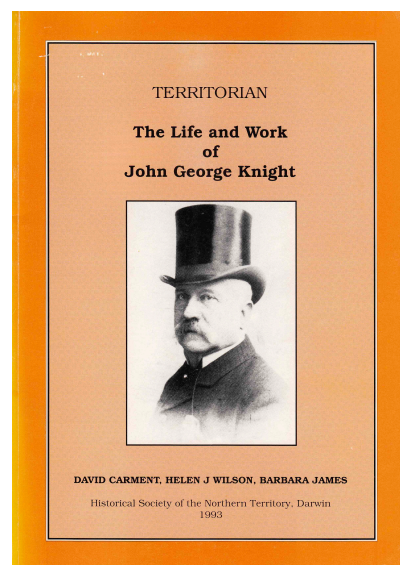
Historian David Carment at the National Trust building designed by Beni Burnett — one of the characters in the Northern Territory *Dictionary of Biography*. Picture: KATRINA BRIDGEFORD.

*Northern Territory News*, 24 February 1992

<sup>14</sup> *Aboriginal History*, vol 17, nos 1 & 2, 1993, pp 173-174.

At the end of February I chaired a National Trust Council meeting in Pine Creek just before the commencement of the new teaching semester. A task that proved quite time consuming was the search for a new National Trust Director, to replace the excellent Penny Cook who was moving to Queensland. As President, I chaired the selection committee and interviews. We appointed the Trust's Research Officer Bob Alford to the job. I finished as Trust President in August with Michael Hester succeeding me. In addition to the 1992 commemorative activities, the Trust was much involved during my presidency in the development of heritage trails and a tourism master plan in the Territory.

As the first semester proceeded there were the usual classes, talks and meetings. Enrolments in History were a bit larger than normal. The Historical Society in May published the book *Territorian: The Life and Work of John George Knight*, which I co-authored with Barbara James and Helen Wilson. Ken Inglis, an eminent historian from The Australian National University, gave an absorbing seminar on 'The Unknown Soldier' at the end of June. I also enjoyed seeing him socially during his Darwin visit. Another interesting visitor was John Strehlow, T.G.H. Strehlow's son. He was in the early stages of preparing a biography of his missionary grandparents at Hermannsburg. During July I joined my parents on a vehicle trip from Darwin to Adelaide. We stopped at numerous historic places along the way. I was pleased to be able to show them National Trust properties that they had not visited before.





**The author with Diana Carment at the Junction Hotel, Newcastle Waters in 1993**

Richard Bosworth of The University of Western Australia, one of Australia's best-known historians of modern Europe, and his public historian wife Michal visited the university just after the start of the semester in late July. Richard gave a really interesting seminar on the historiography of the Second World War. As usual, there were some pleasant social engagements with the visitors.

There were two Historical Society trips during July and August in which I participated. The first was to Maranboy with Sue Harlow as the expert guide. We camped for two nights at an old sawmill site and looked at mines, graves, houses and other places of historic interest. The second trip was to Daly River, south of Darwin. There we examined the old police station, ruins of the 1880s Jesuit mission to the local Aboriginal people, an early farm, the modern and very well cared for Aboriginal community with its attractive Catholic church and some early river landings.



### **Judy Beard and the author at Maranboy in 1993**

During early October I was at Sitges in Spain to attend the European Association for Studies of Australia conference on ‘Australia’s Changing Landscapes’ there. I presented a paper on the cultural landscape of European settlement in Darwin. This was part of my research in progress towards a book. The paper was later published in a book based on the conference proceedings. The conference was well organised and attracted over a hundred participants who included visiting Australians like me and people from various European universities. Sitges, an attractive resort located on the coast south of Barcelona, was a great location and I enjoyed the Spanish food. The only problem was the drunken and rowdy behaviour of a well-known Australian academic at a reception hosted by the Australian Ambassador to Spain.

I was straight back into teaching and activities such as meetings and seminars on my return from Spain. I was reluctantly persuaded to attend a university training program on ‘Total Quality Management’ (TQM), which led to my involvement in a working party designed to recommend TQM changes to the university library’s operation. I found this an exasperating waste of time as little was achieved. More enjoyable was David Headon’s stay with me in late October. He was in Darwin as the guest speaker at the

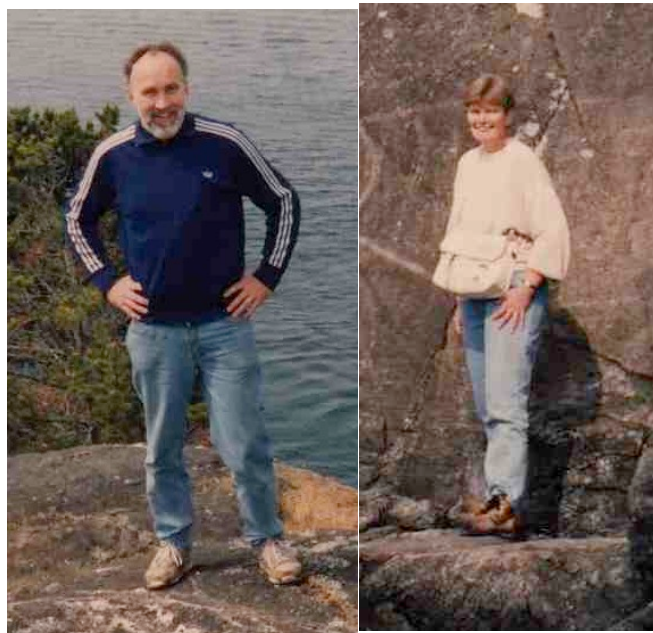
Northern Territory Literary Awards ceremony. Ten years earlier he was responsible for the Awards' inauguration. In early November Kim Beazley, the federal Minister for Education whom I knew when he was a postgraduate student, opened the new strikingly designed university library. Not long after this I attended The Australian National University archaeologist and historian John Mulvaney's superb public lecture on Collet Barker, commandant at the British settlement on Raffles Bay. In mid November I joined many others in celebrating Barbara James's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was a surprise party. She clearly had no idea that it had been planned until it started.

After returning from leave in mid January 1994 I concentrated on the book I was writing on Darwin's historic environment and in early February completed its first draft. My main teaching for the semester was in the introductory subject on Europe between 1748 and 1870 and the advanced subject on North Australia to 1911. My colleague Christine Doran gave a polished seminar in early May on women missionaries in the Straits Settlements. Later that month I guided a Historical Society field trip to the Cox Peninsula. I was able to get a key for the Point Charles Lighthouse, which meant that we climbed the top and observed the panoramic views there. We also looked at the extensive remains of an American aircraft that crashed during the Second World War.



**Point Charles Lighthouse in 1994**

Between late May and mid June I was mainly in Canada and the United States. I stayed at Victoria in Canada with Eric Sager, Brenda Clark and their daughters, who were most hospitable. They showed me many places of historical interest on Vancouver Island, where Victoria is situated, and hosted a dinner for me to meet some of Eric's historian colleagues. From Victoria I flew to Denver in the United States and from there went by road to nearby Golden, where I attended the International Mining History Conference at the Colorado School of Mines. The conference proved worthwhile, with some good papers and excursions to places associated with mining in the Rocky Mountains. My own paper was on Knight's role as Warden, that is the senior government official, at the goldfields in the Pine Creek area. I discovered during the question period that I should have more fully explained to my audience what a mining warden in Australia was as the term did not appear to have been used in the United States.



**Eric Sager and Brenda Clark at Vancouver Island in 1994**

Not long after my return to Darwin, in early July Alan Powell and I embarked on a trip to Gregory National Park in the Victoria River District, where we explored a recently developed four wheel drive track. It followed a loop circuit through limestone

terraced hills and sandstone escarpment where the early European settlers drove cattle to the meatworks in Wyndham, Western Australia. En route we looked at old cattle yards and a former drovers' campsite. On finishing the loop we visited Limestone Gorge, from which we had sweeping views of the East Baines River Valley. On our way back to Darwin we camped near Victoria River Crossing, undertaking two long walks. One took us very close to the escarpment that overlooked the river. We walked among towering *Livistonia* palm trees, viewed the nearby valley and saw Aboriginal rock art.

In mid July I moved with my Faculty colleagues to the new Arts-Law Building at the university's Casuarina campus. My office there was adequate but not as large as the one that I left at Myilly Point. The great benefits of moving to Casuarina were that I was much closer to my Nightcliff home and no longer had to travel between two campuses for meetings.

During late July I guided a Historical Society field trip in the Roper River area. We visited the historic police station at Roper Bar and the depot used for unloading supplies used in the Overland Telegraph Line's construction. We called in on the ruined St Vidgeon homestead and the nearby attractive lagoon.



**Wendy Carter, Judy Beard, Colin Beard, the author, Sue Harlow, Brian Reid and Kay Goon near the former St Vidgeon homestead in 1994**

Also in early August I attended a reception at Government House in Darwin in honour of John George Knight. Administrator Austin Asche launched *'The Real Live Resident': The Annotated Letters of John George Knight, 1889-1892* that Helen Wilson compiled with assistance from Barbara James and me. Two of Knight's great granddaughters and another relation were present. I saw them again at an enjoyable dinner hosted by Helen Wilson and her husband Richard.



**Barbara James (holding *'The Real Live Resident'*) Helen Wilson, the author and three Knight relatives at Darwin in 1994**

I was on study leave during the second semester of 1994. The main purpose of this was to complete my work on Darwin's historic built environment and undertake research on a new project dealing with aspects of Darwin's relationships with East and Southeast Asia that resulted in several publications. I also finished a long commissioned report, coauthored with Sue Harlow, on the history of Northern Territory mining. Much of the leave was spent in Darwin but I also travelled interstate and overseas. In early September, for instance, I was in Adelaide to attend the Federation of Australian Historical Societies Annual General Meeting and the Community History Conference, at

which I presented a paper on the history of Darwin's domestic architecture that was later published as an article in the journal *Northern Perspective*. At the end of September I participated in the Australian Historical Association conference at The University of Western Australia, my first visit there for many years. I presented a paper co-authored with Mickey Dewar on Darwin as an 'Asian capital' that was reported at some length in the *West Australian* newspaper. Following the conference I did research at various libraries in Canberra and Sydney.

A welcome visitor to my university in mid September was my old friend and former University of Western Australia colleague Marian Quartly (formerly Aveling), the newly appointed Dean of Arts at Monash University. I enjoyed showing her around and hosted a dinner at my home for her. She gave two well attended and well received seminars. One was on suffrage and citizenship in late nineteenth century Australia and the other was on writing gender into history.

I was back in Perth again in late October to be interviewed for the new position of Professor of Cultural Heritage Studies at Curtin University. I did not get the job, which went to David Dolan from Sydney, but the selection process proved useful. It included me presenting a seminar to a large audience, a lunch with senior academics, a discussion with the acting head of the university's Centre for Cultural Heritage Studies and a long interview with the selection panel. My shortlisting for the position encouraged me to think about applying for chairs elsewhere and for further promotion at my own university.

After a pleasant holiday in Sydney, I was back at work in Darwin at the end of January 1995. Between then and the start of teaching there were the usual meetings, administrative tasks, preparation of lectures and work on the third *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography* volume. A large and most welcome Northern Territory Government grant allowed me to continue employing Helen Wilson as research officer for the project. John Strehlow stayed with me while he was in Darwin for further research. Teaching commenced in early March. I was responsible for the subjects on modern Europe, North Australia and History and cultural resources in Australia. History enrolments were much the same as in the previous year. As was normal with my North Australian history students, I got them outside the classroom quite regularly with visits to

local archives and libraries, the Museum and Art Gallery, and local sites. In early May I had Don Baker, a distinguished historian from The Australian National University who was most helpful while I was a postgraduate student there, and his partner Pat White to stay. It was great to show them around and entertain them. Don gave a seminar on the explorer Thomas Mitchell. At the end of semester Alan Powell and I explored parts of Kakadu National Park that we had not previously visited. My parents and nephew Carl Cintio visited in late June. We had a pleasant time visiting Kakadu National Park and Katherine. It was Carl's first visit to the Territory. He was especially impressed with Kakadu's Aboriginal rock art.



**Carl Cintio at Nourlangie in 1995**

In early July I attended the Australian Historical Association conference at James Cook University in Townsville. Although interesting, it was not as good as the previous one I went to there. Many of the sessions I attended were organised by the new Australian Mining History Association. Some of the presentations gave microscopic attention to

technical details. My own paper, later published as a *Journal of Northern Territory History* article, on 'Writing the Mining History of Australia's Northern Territory: Past Themes, Current Research and Future Prospects' attempted a much broader perspective. Among the best presentations at the conference was one by Julie Wells on assimilationist perspectives about Aboriginal women, citizenship and marriage in the Northern Territory during the 1950s. She learned approximately a month later that her thesis had passed with excellent examiner's reports. While in Townsville I enjoyed seeing Penny Cook and her husband Ian.

I took a Historical Society group to parts of Gregory National Park in early August. Shortly after I returned Roy MacLeod, a historian of science and museums from The University of Sydney, stayed with me while he was visiting my university. We first met at the mining history conference in Colorado. He gave two of the best seminars I have heard, one on Australia's nuclear history and the other on new museums in Sydney. As usual with visitors, I organised a dinner for him at home and showed him around. At his request, we did a tour of the Ranger Uranium Mine near Jabiru that I had not visited before. It was almost fully automated so ran with very few staff. Because uranium demand was then very low it was only operating on about half its capacity.

The National Trust Council meeting in early September took place in Borroloola. I flew there with some other Councillors in a small and very uncomfortable aeroplane that experienced much turbulence. The rest of the weekend went well, with visits to local historic sites and much business that dealt with on policies, properties, educational activities and projects. I was surprised and delighted to be presented with Honorary Life Membership of the Trust.

Another tour was in light aircraft with other Historical Society members in mid September to Bathurst and Melville Islands. We had three guides, one white man and two Tiwi Aboriginal men, who were terrific. At Nguiu we saw the impressive new museum, the old mission precinct, the school, the Bima Wear factory and the Tiwi Designs premises at Nguiu on Bathurst Island before going to Melville Island where we inspected the remains of Fort Dundas, the first British settlement in North Australia established in 1824. We located various building foundations and the moat around the fort. The British left in 1829 following much Aboriginal resistance to their presence.



**Unknown, the author, Nina Cameron, Barbara James, Bill Wilson, Sue Harlow, Jim Cameron and Kay Goon at Nguiu in 1995**

The second semester, with its normal teaching, marking and meetings, went along fairly uneventfully. The Arts-Law Building was officially and belatedly opened in late September. Landscaping around the building was attractive.

Following my shortlisting for the Curtin University position, I decided to apply for promotion to Professor at my own university. I was far from optimistic about success, as previous applicants were all knocked back. I was confident that my three referees Geoffrey Bolton, Alan Powell and Marian Quartly would support me but correctly predicted that my Dean Ron Penney, whom I found difficult to work with, would not. As things turned out, I was pleased and most relieved to learn in late October that my application was successful. I was fortunate that the expert external member of the committee considering the application was David Walker, a highly respected and fair-minded historian from Deakin University. The promotion took effect at the beginning of the 1996.

In late September I flew to London, where I stayed with the Hamills. While there I presented an invited paper on cultural heritage conservation in the Northern Territory during the 1990s at a seminar organised by Tom Griffiths of the Sir Robert Menzies Centre for Australian Studies at The University of London on Australian heritage stories.

Among those present was the eminent British scholar David Lowenthal, whose works on heritage I greatly admired. He rightly took me to task for some uncritical comments on cultural heritage tourism. My revised paper was later published in the book based on the seminar that Tom edited.

From London I flew to Copenhagen in Denmark for the European Association for Studies of Australia conference. Henry Reynolds of James Cook University gave a thoughtful keynote address on Aboriginal sovereignty that had considerable Northern Territory relevance. My own paper, later published in the *Journal of Northern Territory History*, was on the politics of Aboriginal native title in the Territory. After the conference I walked through parts of Copenhagen with my friend Peter Read. Among other places we went to the Museum of Danish Resistance 1940-1945 dealing with Denmark's controversial Second World War experience.

After returning to Darwin I was occupied until early December with classes and other activities. A visitor whom I helped look after was the anthropologist Roslyn Poignant. Her husband Axel Poignant was a well-known, photographer of North Australia. Roslyn wrote the article on him in the *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography*. I also read through the proofs of my book on Darwin's historic environment that the North Australia Research Unit was publishing. Many of my colleagues and I were pleased that Chris Healey, an able anthropologist with good management skills, was chosen as my Faculty's new Dean to take over from the beginning of 1996. A sadder event was Graeme Bucknall's death in November. I admired him greatly and wrote his obituary for *The Australian* newspaper. At the beginning of December I drove south to Sydney, following a route through the eastern Northern Territory and Queensland.

The long car trip provided plenty of time to reflect on both the past and future. I was obviously pleased with the promotion and continued to enjoy myself as a Northern Territory historian but it was already clear that increasing financial pressures on my university might result in difficult times ahead.

## CHAPTER SIX

### PROFESSING HISTORY 1996-2001

By the late 1990s financial pressures on the social sciences and humanities at Northern Territory University were taking a heavy toll. All English literature staff members were controversially made redundant in 1997. There were redundancies in other areas both then and again, including the two most senior anthropologists, in 2000. No History staff member was made to go but when Alan Powell, Paul Webb, Robyn Maynard and Paul Webb retired they were not replaced. Historians did not replace Tony Austin and Michael Christie when they resigned from the Faculty of Education. As staff capacity diminished the number of History subjects on offer was cut back.

There were, however, some positive elements. Postgraduate enrolments remained strong. The new North Australian Studies 'common unit' that I inaugurated, convened and taught with colleagues from various disciplines usually had more than 200 enrolments. The annual History Colloquium continued with increasing support, as did the *Journal of Northern Territory History*. Mickey Dewar spent 1996 as a Postdoctoral Fellow at the university, researching *Inside Out: A Social History of Fannie Bay Gaol* that was published in 1999. Later appointed Curator of Territory History at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, she and Philip Freier, the Anglican Bishop of Darwin (and later Archbishop of Melbourne) who had a doctorate in History, held honorary university positions. Alan Powell remained active in research and teaching as an Emeritus Professor.

Promotion to Professor initially brought few changes to my own role. I taught, researched, published and supervised in the same areas as previously and served on various boards and committees in both the university and the wider community. From 1998 I was the Associate Dean for Research and Postgraduate Studies in the Faculty of Arts and from 1999 in the new Faculty of Law, Business and Arts. I also received grants. I was made a Fellow of the Australian Council of Education (now Educators) in 1999 and an Honorary Life Member of the Historical Society of the Northern Territory in 2000. In 1997 I received a postgraduate supervision award and in 1999 the university's annual Award for Excellence in Teaching. I continued to occupy the same office.



**The author at his Northern Territory University office in 1998**



**The Arts-Law Building, Northern Territory University in 1999**

My car trip from Sydney to Darwin during January 1996 took me through South Australia and Central Australia. As usual, I stopped off at various places of historic interest although the extremely hot weather meant that I only spent short periods outside the comfort of my air-conditioned vehicle. It was useful to see Bonney Well, a National

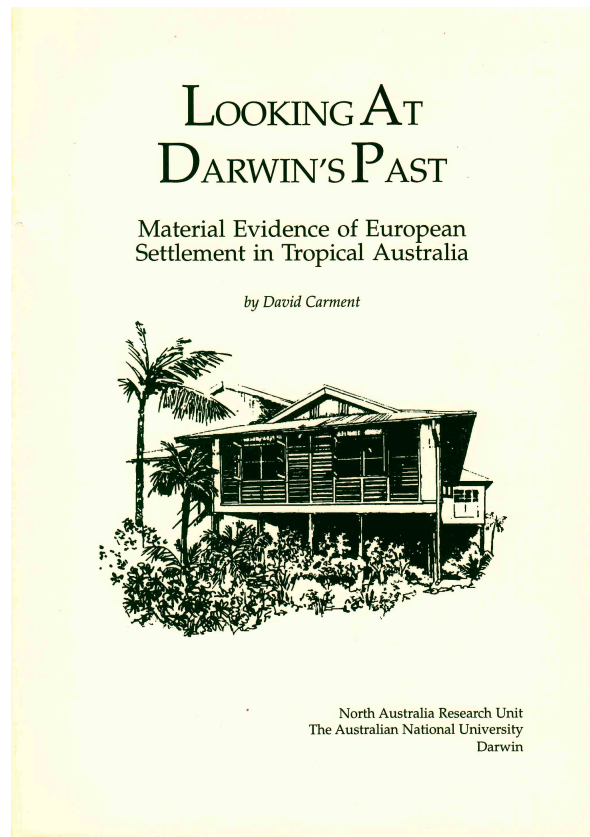
Trust property south of Tennant creek, which shortly before then had much needed conservation work.



### **Bonney Well in 1996**

I was quickly into university activities. An initial task was to complete my entry on Darwin that subsequently appeared in the *Oxford Companion to Australian History*. I also wrote *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography* entries and prepared myself for teaching. Good news came in the form of a Northern Territory Government grant to publish the *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography*'s third volume.

Roger Holmes, the university's new Vice-Chancellor, launched my book *Looking at Darwin's Past: Material Evidence of European Settlement in Tropical Australia* at a well attended function in Darwin's Parliament House on 21 February. I thought it was better than *History and the Landscape in Central Australia* but its reviews were more mixed. The book was about the efforts of Europeans and descendants to live in Australia's only tropical capital city as revealed in structures and sites. It showed how this material evidence could be interpreted within the wider context of white Australian culture. It made extensive use of photographs, drawings, maps and plans.



The first teaching semester commenced immediately after my return from a National Trust Council meeting in Alice Springs. History enrolments were similar to those of the previous year although numbers in introductory subjects were slightly down and those in advanced subjects were slightly up. I had almost 50 undergraduate students in my own classes.

In late June at the invitation of Chief Minister Shane Stone, I gave a speech near Government House to commemorate the 1918 Darwin Rebellion, when angry trade unionists forced the departure of the Northern Territory's first Administrator John Gilruth. I talked about the event in terms of the emergence of a strong local trade union movement and a clash of personalities between the Administrator and the main union leader Harold Nelson. The Chief Minister spoke next before unveiling a plaque. He thanked me for my remarks but indicated that he disagreed with aspects of my interpretation. For him the Darwin Rebellion was a most significant event in Territory residents' struggle for statehood and needed to be primarily viewed in that context. He

likened it, as did the plaque, to the 1854 Eureka uprising in Victoria. Our differences of opinion here started me thinking about a research project that I commenced a few years later on the ways in which the Territory's historical memory was created, disseminated, institutionalised and understood.

Towards the end of May I joined other Historical Society members on a field trip to the Aboriginal community of Gunbalanya (formerly Oenpelli) in Arnhem Land that Suzanne Parry organised with permission from the traditional owners. Climbing to the top of a hill near the town, we encountered vast natural galleries full of richly textured rock art. It remains the finest rock art site that I have seen. We also walked through the town and visited the excellent art centre, where several artists were at work.

Following a short holiday in Queensland with my parents, in late June I joined Alan Powell on a visit to the northwestern Northern Territory. We followed the very rough Duncan Road that straddled the border with Western Australia, camping on the Negri River not far from the historic Mistake Creek homestead. We then took an even rougher track, on which we could only travel very slowly, that wound south for over a hundred kilometres through hills and creek crossings until we reached Kalkarindji. We returned home via the Delamere Road and Katherine.

In mid July I flew to Melbourne for another Australian Historical Association conference at The University of Melbourne. Before the conference commenced I spent an enjoyable but cold couple of days with the Hennessys, then living in the beautiful Victorian high country at Hoqwua, and met a few other friends in Melbourne. The conference went well. I presented a paper on the impact of the Tennant Creek gold rush on the local Aboriginal people, the Warumungu, which became the basis of a much more substantial book chapter. It was delivered in a very husky voice as I had severe laryngitis that hit me during the conference.

Northern Territory University experienced a crisis when shortly after being appointed Vice-Chancellor Roger Holmes announced that he was leaving in the middle of 1996 to become Vice-Chancellor at The University of Newcastle. His promising start to the job in Darwin made him popular among staff members and students but the unexpected departure led to strong criticisms. The student newspaper remarked that he seemed too good to be true and, unfortunately, was not. Rather than re-advertising the

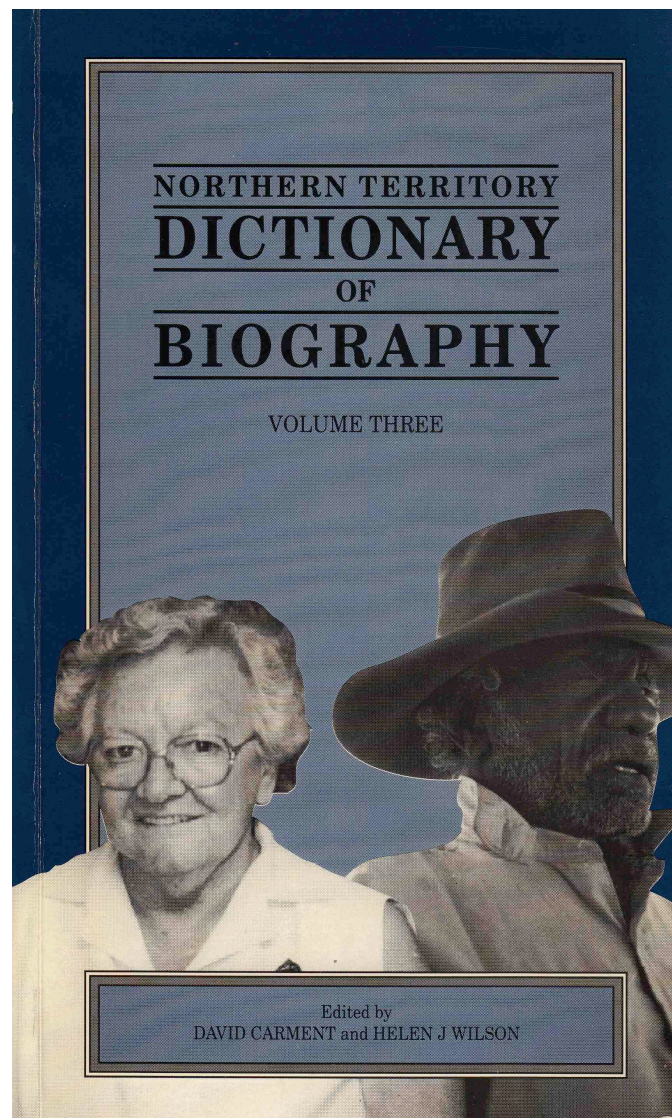
position, the university's Council decided to appoint Deputy Vice-Chancellor Ron McKay to succeed Roger. Ron, whom I admired and liked, was enormously conscientious and dedicated to the university but came to his new role in particularly difficult circumstances. In August the university learned that the cut in its Commonwealth operating grants for the following year would be about 10 per cent in real terms.

Another worthwhile Historical Society trip was in early August when we explored a variety of Second World War sites in and around Adelaide River before going onto Pine Creek where we inspected further historic sites mainly associated with the former railway and mining. We camped near the old Grove Hill Hotel where the owner Jan Hills gave us a superb meal. On the following day we saw the Chinese temple and former hotel at nearby Brocks Creek before looking at the old cemetery and mine at Zapopan.

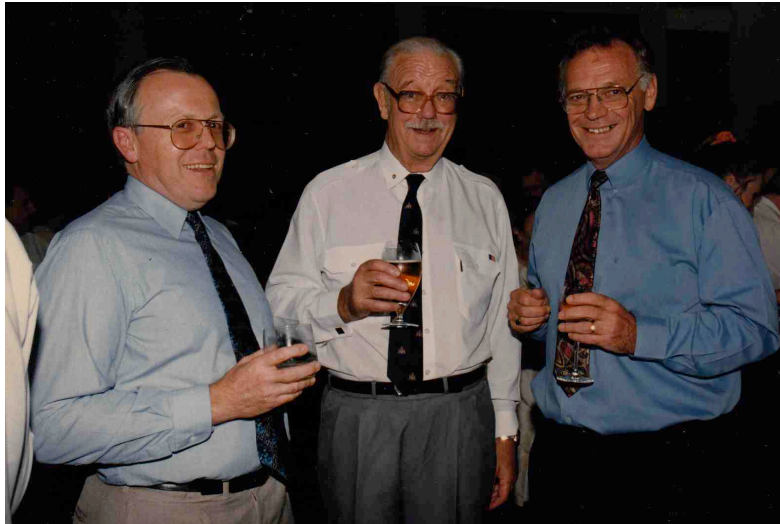
The second semester started in early August. There were the normal classes, marking, meetings and administrative tasks. A rewarding activity was a local history workshop at the State Library of the Northern Territory that I helped organise. I was also involved in a review of the Bachelor of Arts course. It was a nervous time in my Faculty as we awaited news of what we predicted would be severe funding cuts. Students became particularly concerned. In mid October a large group of them staged a 'sit in' at a university Planning Board meeting that the Vice-Chancellor chaired. It reminded me of events when I was an undergraduate student during the late 1960s and early 1970s. More pleasurable were my quite regular contacts with Baiba Berzins and Peter Loveday who although then living in Sydney were returning to Darwin quite regularly to work on their commissioned history of the university that appeared in 1999. In late October I gave the National Trust's annual Heritage Awareness Lecture to a large audience. The topic was Darwin's built heritage. Barry Higman from The Australian National University visited in early November and I learnt much from my discussions with him. A historian of the West Indies, he later wrote a history of domestic service in Australia. I shared close mutual friends in Canberra, Don and Jenny Rowland, with him and his demographer wife Merle. They stayed with me in Darwin during the following year and I saw them from time to time in the years that followed.

The third and most substantial volume of the *Northern Territory Dictionary of*

*Biography* appeared at the end of the year. Co-edited by Helen Wilson and me, its focus was on individuals whose Territory careers flourished between 1978 and 1990. It also, though, included entries on many who were prominent in earlier periods and not recorded in the first two volumes. Both subjects and authors covered a wide cross section of the community. The volume was generally well received although one reviewer, Jennifer Harrison, criticised its inclusion of people who were still living, saying that this prevented the *Dictionary* from presenting full accounts of them. I was not surprised at this as it was an issue over which we agonised. With the benefit of hindsight, I now believe that the criticism was justified.



Shortly after my return to work in 1997, in early February I attended the reception at Government House that farewelled Austin Ashe as Administrator. He performed outstandingly in that role and was a strong supporter of history and heritage activities. He and his wife Val, a distinguished scientist, remained in Darwin. Both continued to actively support organisations such as the National Trust and the Historical Society. Austin remained Patron of the latter.



**The author with Austin Ashe and Steve Hatton at Government House,  
Darwin in 1997**

Teaching started in late February. I had over 70 students in my classes and part-time teaching assistance. As course coordinator I wrote the Bachelor of Arts re-accreditation submission, an enormously time-consuming task. By this stage I was quite regularly speaking to University of the Third Age groups. In mid-March, for instance, I lectured on Australian nationalism to one group. With other Professors in late March I met members of the Commonwealth government's committee inquiring into higher education chaired by Roderick West, a former independent school headmaster, when they visited Darwin. I noted in a letter to my parents of 21 March that 'Mr West seemed a pleasant person but rather naïve'. At much the same time, in my capacity as the Chair of Northern Territory University Press, I met Judith (Judy) Chisholm about her memoirs

that the Press later published. She was the widow of Tony Chisholm, a prominent Central Australian pastoralist who was widely but incorrectly said to be the illegitimate son of his godfather King Edward VIII, later the Duke of Windsor. She showed me photos and documents about Tony, including a long and warm letter from the Duke when he was Prince of Wales to Tony's mother Mollee. In early April I caught up with John Strehlow again during one of his now quite frequent Darwin visits. An unusual experience was my long ABC interview with the well-known broadcaster Phillip Adams, who was visiting Darwin. I was one of four people, including Shane Stone, interviewed in the same session to discuss Darwin's relations with Asia. I found Phillip's style laid back and he made mistakes. The normally impeccably dressed Shane Stone turned up for the interview in stubby shorts and thongs.

In mid-June Chris Healey made his long anticipated announcement about a major Faculty restructure designed to respond to funding cuts and the need to build on areas of strength in regional studies. Eleven staff members in English, Fine Arts, Politics and Sociology were made redundant. Some new appointments were planned for other areas but overall the Faculty would be smaller. I hoped but was far from certain that the new strategy would work. As things turned out, the decision to stop offering English literature was a mistake. It damaged the reputation of both the Faculty and the university. Many years later it was reversed.

Although it was not my area, I enjoyed a conference on the history of medicine that Brian Reid organised in Darwin during early July. It was good to meet some of the participants, including historians I already knew such as Barry Smith and Anthea Hyslop. Not long after the conference my former University of Western Australia mentor Tom Stannage and his wife Maria were in Darwin. Tom kindly attended a seminar by one of the History doctoral students, Jane Bathgate, on the Pine Creek area and made characteristically helpful comments. Other visitors were Xavier Pons, a well-known Australian Studies specialist from The University of Toulouse in France and the President of the European Association for Studies of Australia, and his wife Geraldine. Xavier was at the university as a Visiting Professor. I saw a lot of him and Geraldine and became friends with both. They enjoyed Darwin so much that they were keen to return. Later in the month Alan Powell and I drove to Western Australia to visit the spectacular Purnulu

National Park, home of the Bungle Bungles. En route we camped at what had become a favourite spot on the banks of the East Baines River near Timber Creek. I also was pleased to catch up in Darwin with Susan Ballyn, the Australian literature specialist at The University of Barcelona in Spain who organised the conference I attended in Sitges. At the end of July I took a Historical Society group to the Victoria River District, where we camped at Jasper Gorge and visited historic places, including the recently conserved Australian Inland Mission's Wimmera Nursing Home at Victoria River Downs.



**Alan Powell near the East Baines River in 1997**



**The Wimmera Nursing Home in 1997**

The second semester began in early August. A week later I took my new archaeologist colleague Clayton Fredericksen to see historic sites around Adelaide River and Pine Creek that I thought might interest him. They did and he subsequently undertook significant work at some of the sites and elsewhere in the Territory's Top End. During the early part of the semester I enjoyed quite frequent contacts with Tom Griffiths, now an environmental historian at The Australian National University, and his family. Tom was visiting the North Australia Research Unit. His wife Libby Robin was also a respected environmental historian.

While a National Trust Council meeting at the end of August I went to a terrific function at the Tennant Creek Telegraph Station to mark its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A couple of hundred people were there as was the well-known bush band Bloodwood. On a cold evening we sat by fires under a perfect starry sky while listening to the music and eating corned beef and damper. Among those present were the British journalist Alice Thomson and her journalist husband Ed Heathcoat-Amory. Alice was writing a book about her great great grandparents Sir Charles Todd, who was responsible for the Overland Telegraph Line's construction, and his wife Alice, after whom Alice Springs was named. I quickly established rapport with both Alice and Ed as we had interests in common. I saw them again in Darwin, showing them places associated with the Overland Telegraph as well as modern Darwin, which they were keen to see. Alice later wrote about me in her popular 1999 book *The Singing Line*. My comments on the Internet's value in otherwise remote Darwin led her to rather romantically describing me as using 'the modern-day telegraph, the Internet, to stay in touch' with the outside world and being 'a worthy successor to those early telegraph men, tapping at night on his computer as they tapped out their lives down an earlier wire'.<sup>15</sup>

During early September, with Suzanne Parry as master of ceremonies, I launched Mickey Dewar's new book *In Search of the 'Never-Never': Looking for Australia in Northern Territory Writing* that Northern Territory University Press published with the assistance of a large grant for the Australia Foundation for Culture and the Humanities. A couple of hundred people attended, many being delegates at a national Museums Australia conference in Darwin that she helped organise. Based on Mickey's doctoral

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<sup>15</sup> Alice Thomson, *The Singing Line*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1999, p 244.

thesis, the book remains a significant contribution to Northern Territory history.



**Suzanne Parry, the author and Mickey Dewar at the *In Search of the 'Never-Never'* launch in 1997**

Not long before the Museums Australia conference *Australian Historical Studies* published my review of the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory's recently opened exhibition on Chinese families in the Territory. I praised various aspects of the exhibition but argued that it downplayed the racial discrimination directed against the Territory's Chinese community and failed to acknowledge numerous and important relationships between Chinese men and Aboriginal women. At the conference the exhibition curator Glen Dimond contended that History curators had 'an obligation to avoid hurting people' and were sometimes under 'huge pressure' to keep their stories 'sweet and friendly'.<sup>16</sup> Because the Chinese committee with which she worked wanted the exhibition to be positive, Glen felt obliged to go along with their wishes. By the exhibition's opening day, the territory Chinese community 'had developed an extremely strong sense of ownership of this exhibition'.<sup>17</sup>

Between mid September and mid October I was in Europe to attend the European

<sup>16</sup> Glen Dimond, 'Chinese Whispers: ABC Territory', in Ian Walters, Mickey Dear, Sue Harlow, Jacky Healey, Daena Murray & Barry Russell (eds), *Unlocking Museums: Proceedings 4<sup>th</sup> National Conference of Museums Australia Inc Darwin Northern Territory 1997*, Museums Australia, N.T. Branch, Darwin, 1997, p 159.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p 163.

Association for Studies of Australia conference at Klagenfurt in Austria and take some recreation leave in Austria, Switzerland and Britain. My conference paper was on Darwin's links with Asia in the context of the Commonwealth government's Committee on Darwin report that appeared in 1995. At both the conference and in my much more substantial occasional paper *Australia's Asian Capital? Darwin and Asia* published in late 1997 by my university's Centre for Southeast Asian Studies I supported the Committee's view that Darwin had not taken full advantage of the opportunities its strategic situation offered. I suggested that the relationship between Darwin and its Asian neighbours was often contradictory and puzzling and concluded that the continuing claims of Darwin in some ways being 'Asian' owed more to evolving ideas about Australian national identity than any other factors. The conference generally went well. I enjoyed exploring Klagenfurt and its region. I also saw friends such as the poet Mark O'Connor and Xavier Pons. While in the Swiss city of Geneva I spent much of a day with June Kane, who had moved there from Darwin. Among other places, she took me to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum. I had a long lunch with John Strehlow and his actress wife Debbie Radcliffe at their large home in London where John had an impressive collection of his father's publications. I returned to Darwin via Canberra, where I stayed with Barry Higman (Merle was away) and attended a Heads of History meeting at The Australian National University that he hosted.

I returned to lots of marking and meetings in Darwin. The Administrator Neil Conn chaired one of the latter. He was keen to update a Northern Territory historical chronicle that was published some years earlier. Anita Angel, an able postgraduate student under my supervision, was later appointed to undertake this task. In early November I appeared on behalf of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies before the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Constitutional Development that was meeting in Darwin to argue the case for the retention of all census data. Darwin's geographic proximity to parts of Southeast Asia was emphasised in mid November when there was a thick haze over the city for close to a week that was caused by large fires in Indonesia. In early December Tom Griffiths stayed with me while doing research in Darwin.

After a holiday in Sydney, I was back in Darwin in early January 1998. I attended

to a range of administrative chores, wrote a political chronicle, saw students and acted as Dean until later in the month. At the beginning of February I joined my fellow National Trust Councillor Lesley Mearns in seeing our local member of the Territory parliament Steve Hatton about improvements to the Territory's heritage legislation. Towards the end of February I attended a productive National Trust Council meeting in Alice Springs that dealt with difficult financial issues. We visited the historic former prison that was threatened with demolition, two houses that the Trust had acquired and the new Desert Park.



**National Trust house at Hartley Street in 1998**

The teaching semester commenced at the end of February. I was involved in teaching four different subjects and had a growing postgraduate supervision load. Coordination of the North Australian Studies common unit that was being taught for the first time proved particularly time consuming due to the large number of other staff members involved in it with whom I had to consult. The subject was offered both internally and later externally. The aim was to provide students from across the university with a multi disciplinary perspective to the region in which most of them lived. I learned much from my doctoral students, all of whom were working on Northern Territory topics. One of them, Peter Elder, in 1998 completed his meticulously researched thesis on

Territory Administrator Aubrey Abbott, who held the post throughout the Second World War. Another, Bill Wilson, worked on what became the standard history of the Northern Territory Police Force until the mid 1920s that he completed in 2000. A former Assistant Police Commissioner in the Territory, he was well equipped for the topic. Perhaps the most innovative student was Terry Whitebeach, already a well-published author, whose thesis was a life history of the Aboriginal stockman and pastoralist Don Ross. She graduated, after being delayed by health problems, in 2006. I was being increasingly called on to provide media commentary on Territory history and politics. In late March, for instance, I did an ABC interview on the Northern Territory Statehood Convention then taking place in Darwin. I became interested in the discussion of whether or not the Territory ought to become a state and later wrote about it. Other demanding responsibilities included membership of the university's committee that audited staff publication data and of its academic promotions committee. A Historical Society excursion in early May was to the NORFORCE Army Reserve unit's headquarters and museum in Darwin. The unit began during the Second World War and had many Aboriginal soldiers.



**Historical Society of the Northern Territory members at the NORFORCE museum, in 1998 – Renate Mohrbach is close to the centre of the picture**

Following the usual end of semester marking and meetings, at the beginning of July I commenced six months' study leave to work on a book and other publications, including a *Public History Review* article on presenting history in Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Parks, about cultural heritage management in the Northern Territory. During early July I attended the Australian Historical Association conference at The University of Sydney. I presented two papers there. One dealt with public history and the study of memory. It responded to the American historian David Glassberg's much discussed recent article on the same topic in the *The Public Historian* and was an early draft of the first chapter in my book. It generated useful discussion. The other paper was to a mining history session and was on historic mining sites in the Tennant Creek district. Shortly after my return I began a series of extensive car trips visiting and documenting historic places throughout the Northern Territory that were interpreted to the public. I stayed in Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, Ayers Rock Resort, Kakadu National Park, Timber Creek and near Borroloola. It was the peak of the tourist season and other visitors at the places I went to sometimes looked at me curiously as I busily photographed interpretation panels and plaques. The standard of interpretation varied greatly but at localities such as the gold mining sites at Arltunga Historical Reserve in Central Australia was impressive. I was fortunate to walk around Uluru after heavy rainfall resulted in waterfalls cascading down the rock face.



**Horizontal steam engine at Arltunga Historical Reserve in 1998**

When not travelling on my study leave, I mainly consolidated my research data, read relevant documentary and secondary sources, and drafted chapters. I also documented all the Darwin places that I intended to include in my book. During early December I was in Canberra for research at the National Library.

I tried not to be distracted by other events but some were too appealing to miss. In early August I went to seminars by the historian Henry Reynolds and his wife Senator Margaret Reynolds at the North Australia Research Unit and chaired a seminar that Henry gave at the university about the book he was planning on northern Australia. I participated in National Trust Council and Federation of Australian of Historical Societies meetings in Darwin during late August. I took the Federation delegates on a historical walk around Darwin and was involved in various social activities with them. Tom Griffiths stayed with me again in mid September while he did some local research. I also met then with Rodney Cavalier and Tony Eggleton from the National Council for the Centenary of Federation to discuss possible commemorative programs in the Territory. Barbara James gave an address on the Territory and Federation at the Historical Society's annual Patron's Dinner in late September. The annual History Colloquium that occurred shortly after then included good papers with large audiences. Bob Alford, the National Trust Director, announced that he was resigning to become a consultant, which led to my involvement in the search for his successor. We appointed Elizabeth Close, who had relevant experience as a History educator and museum director. Peter Read stayed with me in early October while he interviewed for a research project. I gave a well-attended public talk in late November about the Northern Territory National Trust's history to commemorate its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I focussed on individual members who made notable contributions. Also in late November, as Chair of Northern Territory University Press I was involved in Chief Minister Shane Stone's launch of my colleague Alistair Heatley's important book *The Territory Party: The Northern Territory Country Liberal Party 1974-1998*. While in Canberra I joined the Federation of Australian Historical Societies President Don Garden to meet the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment Senator Robert Hill. We discussed our wish for more Commonwealth funding to the Federation. We had a good hearing and were later pleased to learn of an increased Commonwealth

grant.



**Alistair Heatley and Shane Stone at *The Territory Party's* launch, Parliament House, Darwin, in 1998**

Following a holiday in Sydney and Brisbane I was back in Darwin by late January 1999. Among my initial tasks were work on another political chronicle and meeting the newly arrived National Trust Director Elizabeth Close and the Dean of the new Faculty of Law Business and Arts Sue Oliver. In early February I did media interviews on Shane Stone's sudden resignation as Chief Minister. Like most I observers attributed this to the narrow defeat of the Territory's statehood referendum on 3 October 1998, which was widely interpreted as a personal rebuke to the Chief Minister. In some other respects, though, he was effective and strong so I was surprised that so many Country Liberals wanted him to go. His successor Denis Burke went on to lose the 2001 Legislative Assembly elections, bringing to an end almost three decades of uninterrupted rule for his party. I also commented on the newly elected Labor leader Clare Martin. I had known her since the early 1980s. She was a former ABC journalist and was a student of mine for a semester. I held her in high regard.

Teaching began at the beginning of March. History enrolments were much the same as the previous year. I also lectured to the Darwin University of the Third Age group. In early April I participated in my first teleconference as a member of the Australian Historical Association's Executive. The Association was the principal national organisation for academic and professional historians in Australia. At the end of April I attended a ceremony at Parliament House to mark Northern Territory University's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the launch there of Baiba Berzins and Peter Loveday's comprehensive *University for the Territory: The Northern Territory University and Preceding Institutions 1949-1999*. Another launch in early May was by Marcia Langton, Professor of Aboriginal Studies at my university, of Tony Austin and Suzanne Parry's edited book *Connection and Disconnection: Encounters between Settlers and Indigenous People in the Northern Territory*. My chapter in it was on the dispossession of the Warumungu people in the Tennant Creek area between 1932 and 1936. I regard it as one of my better pieces of work.

The break between semesters was especially event filled. In mid June I acted for my Dean at a Faculty prize giving. It was pleasing to see good History students being recognised. On the following June I joined a large group of Australian Vice-Chancellors and their partners as guide for a tour to Katherine and back. They were in Darwin for an Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee meeting. At the beginning of July I spent a morning with the well-known Australian writer Alex Buzo showing him around Darwin. He was preparing a *Sydney Morning Herald* article on the city. Shortly after that I attended a Federation of Australian Historical Societies meeting in Hobart. Among topics discussed was the appointment of an administrative officer using some of the increased Commonwealth funding. A day after my return I received my Fellowship of the Australian College of Education at a special ceremony in Parliament House held in association with the College's national conference then taking place in Darwin. I joined the College President Susan Pascoe and her historian husband Rob from Victoria University for lunch at the Darwin Sailing Club. I first met both when we all lived in Perth. Towards the end of July Alan Powell and I went to Gregory National Park to document places that I wished to include in my book. We inspected Bullita Homestead and its well-conserved stockyards before following the Humbert Track. A former stock

route, the track included stockyards and drovers' campsites.



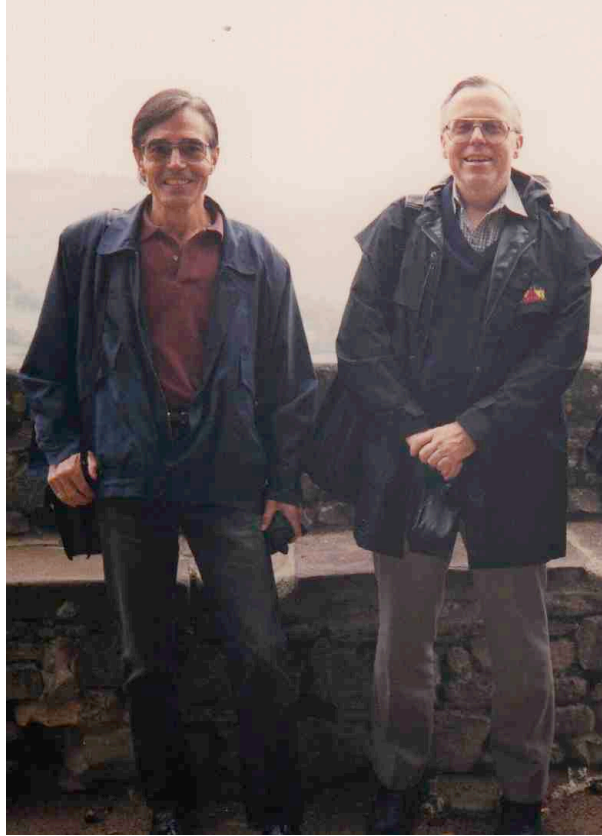
**The author with History students Nina Cameron (left) and Naomi Lane (right) at a prize giving ceremony, Northern Territory University in 1999**



**Interpretive signage at Bullita Homestead in 1999**

I was back to teaching at the end of July. In early August I joined other Historical Society members on a trip that included the Mataranka, Larrimah and Daly Waters areas. We camped on the edge of the Gorrie Second World War airstrip. My former University of Western Australia colleague Brian de Garis, then at Murdoch University, and his wife Jenny, an accomplished poet, stayed with me in early August. I also attended the funeral of Ellen Kettle, a former bush nurse who wrote a detailed history of health services in the Territory. I was in Canberra for a Federation of Australian Historical Societies meeting in late August. During early September I witnessed at first hand some events associated with the crisis in East Timor. Military aircraft passed overhead regularly as they conveyed Timorese refugees to Darwin. The harbour was full of warships. On 8 September the Northern Territory Government allowed the demolition of the historic Hotel Darwin, a much-loved landmark. This resulted in considerable public anger. The National Trust, on whose Council I still served, unsuccessfully took legal action to halt the demolition. Its failure led to renewed calls for stronger heritage legislation. In the middle of the month I was master of ceremonies at the Northern Territory Literary Awards presentation ceremony and participated in a historians' panel that was part of Northern Territory Writers Week. I officiated at the launch by former federal parliamentarian Sam Calder of Judith Chisholm's book *Destined for the Desert: Memoirs of 35 Years in Central Australia*.

I was overseas from late September until mid October, attending the European Association for Studies of Australia conference at Toulouse in France and then taking leave in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The conference, mainly organised by Xavier Pons, went well. A revised version of my conference paper on 'The Northern Territory's Past: Public History, Public Memory and Cultural Heritage Tourism' was later included in a Melbourne University Press book that Xavier edited. My colleague Alistair Heatley was also there, presenting a paper on the failure of the Territory statehood referendum, the longer version of which was also in Xavier's book. It is the best assessment of the referendum but was, sadly, Alistair's last publication. He died of lung cancer the following year. It was great to see Xavier and Geraldine again as well as catch up with other friends such as Tom Griffiths. The overall standard of the conference was high. I liked exploring Toulouse, the 'pink city', and some places nearby.



**Xavier Pons and the author near Toulouse in 1999**

The remainder of the second semester proceeded fairly uneventfully. I was kept fully occupied in late November when I acted as Dean. There was the usual end of semester marking. I enjoyed the opening of a new exhibition on nineteenth century Darwin at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

Waiting for me in early January 2000 after my return to work from a break in Sydney was a letter from Vice-Chancellor Ron McKay advising that I had received the university's 1999 Award for Excellence in Teaching in the Higher Education sector. He referred to my 'long and distinguished contribution to teaching', my availability to students and my 'ability to generate interest and enthusiasm'.<sup>18</sup> A committee of staff members and students selected me for the honour after I was asked to provide a statement on my teaching practices, my teaching materials, evidence of innovation and evidence of

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<sup>18</sup> Ron McKay, letter to David Carment, 17 December 1999.

changes made in response to student evaluations. Committee members also observed me at work. Although I enjoyed teaching and always accorded it a high priority, I was surprised to receive the award, particularly as the students who nominated me came from the North Australian Studies common unit that I found far more challenging than my History subjects. As I remarked in a later interview, 'I had to work hard to keep the interest of those students who were reluctant to be there. Perhaps the hard work showed'.<sup>19</sup> I also emphasised that effective teaching extended beyond the classroom.

Much of January and February were devoted to preparation for teaching, meetings and administration. Classes commenced at the end of February. Because of Alistair Heatley's ill health, I taught Australian politics in addition to my History and North Australian Studies subjects. During early February I was acting Dean again. I also did media commentary in March regarding the by election for Shane Stone's former electorate of Port Darwin. As others and I predicted, the Country Liberals retained the seat with a reduced majority. In late March I wrote an article for the *Alice Springs News* on the contentious issue of mandatory sentencing in the Territory. I argued that by its actions in support of mandatory sentencing the Territory government was almost inviting the Commonwealth parliament to overturn the relevant legislation in much the same way as it had with the earlier Territory voluntary euthanasia legislation. The university's financial problems continued to cause difficulties. The Vice-Chancellor was heckled and jeered during his address to staff and students in late March when explaining the latest round of staff redundancies. In mid April I attended the National Trust Heritage Awards dinner. It went well but there was criticism of the venue, the Darwin Turf Club, which had done much to contribute to Darwin's serious gambling problems. I formally received my Excellence in Teaching Award at a graduation ceremony in early May.

During the mid semester break in late June I was involved in an interesting and successful seminar at the university for Australian Defence Force officers and non commissioned officers on Aborigines in the Territory's Top End. I spoke on Aboriginal participation in the defence of the region during the Second World War. There were over a hundred in the audience. Several speakers were Aboriginal people.

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<sup>19</sup> Kathie Rea, 'Excellence in Teaching Award', in *Intuition*, June 2000, p 10.

I attended the Australian Historical Association conference at The University of Adelaide during early July. A few hundred historians participated and, as usual, concurrent sessions sometimes made it difficult to decide what to attend. There were also keynote addresses. My own paper, in a mining history session, was about the presentation of mining cultural heritage in the Northern Territory. An expanded version was later published in the *Journal of Australasian Mining History*. The standard of presentations was generally high. Jill Roe was re-elected as President of the Association and I was re-elected to its Executive. The conference dinner was in the Barr Smith Library's beautiful reading room.

The second semester commenced at the end of July with the normal flurry of activity. Even more students than normal, perhaps reflecting growing uncertainty about the future of some areas of study, sought my advice.

At the end of the month I took part in a long weekend Historical Society field trip to the Roper River and Gulf areas that I described in some detail in a letter to my parents of 31 July.

*Late on Thursday I picked up a hired four wheel drive vehicle from the airport. It was a very comfortable automatic Toyota Landcruiser. On the following morning I collected my two passengers, Sue Harlow and Nina Cameron, and drove to Roper Bar, where we met about 30 participants in the Historical Society trip I had organised. As always, the journey from Mataranka to Roper Bar was beautiful. We all looked at the old police station precinct before taking the Nathan River Road. That evening we camped at a picturesque spot on the Roper's bank. It was very cold indeed. The next day was most interesting. We followed the very pretty Nathan River Road, stopping at the old St Vidgeon homestead, now abandoned, and the nearby lagoon. The road took us through some superb scenery and included river and creek crossings. We had lunch at Nathan River Homestead, now the headquarters of the Parks and Wildlife Commission in the Gulf region. Our hosts were Eddie Webber, the regional manager, and his partner Janet Leather. I know both through the National Trust, in which they are heavily involved. The homestead is most comfortable and surrounded by well kept gardens and rocky hills. It is on the site of a homestead established by John Costello in the 1880s. After lunch Eddie*

*showed us around. The homestead is very close to attractive natural springs. We left the homestead after a couple of hours there and continued along the Nathan River Road until we camped the night near Borroloola. Yesterday we visited the excellent National Trust museum at Borroloola, the Borroloola cemetery and the banks of the McArthur River before driving along the Carpentaria Highway to the Carabarini Conservation Reserve, where there are magnificent rock formations and billabongs. Last night we camped near Daly Waters before returning to Darwin.*



### **Nathan River Homestead in 2000**

Once back at work, in early August I was master of ceremonies at Northern Territory Literary Awards presentation and involved in the annual History Colloquium. Interesting visitors whom I had to dinner at home were my brother Tom's friends the former senior Commonwealth minister Neal Blewett, whose doctorate was in political history, and his partner Robert Brain, an anthropologist. In mid August I had a working lunch with Neil Conn and Ron McKay to discuss further progress on the compendium of Territory dates. There was a National Trust Council meeting in Alice Springs later that month. Campbell Macknight, by then at The University of Tasmania in Launceston, and his archivist wife Lorraine stayed with me during early September.

I spent a few weeks from mid September in Britain, where I participated in the British Australian Studies Association Conference in London and took a couple of weeks' leave travelling with my parents. The conference theme was 'Comings and Goings: Britain and Australia, Past and Future'. My paper, co-authored with Jim Cameron and Clayton Fredericksen, was on the first British settlement in the Northern Territory at Fort Dundas. It was encouraging that a number of speakers emphasised that British-Australian studies could not ignore the influence of Asia. Regina Ganter of Griffith University in her 'Decentering Britain-Australia's Asian History' addressed the vital Northern Territory theme of Asian-Aboriginal contacts.

I travelled to Melbourne in mid October to attend the Federation of Australian Historical Societies meetings there. Among matters discussed was a recent and thorough survey of Australian historical societies undertaken for the Federation by my sociologist colleague Bill Tyler. The meetings were interrupted to allow those present and other invited guests to see the Commonwealth Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs David Kemp announce his government's response to the recent National Inquiry into School History. He stressed History's importance at all levels of education and outlined funding to implement the Inquiry's major recommendations that were designed to improve History teaching, and lead to more History being studied and taught.

I was not entirely surprised to learn on my return to Darwin in mid October that the Museum and Art Gallery's Director Patrick Filmer-Sankey, with whom I got on well, had resigned. He accused the Northern Territory Government of political interference in the Museum's operations. 'If', he said, 'the Museum and Art Gallery is to retain credibility with the community, we must be seen to have some capacity to determine on our own programs and to tell stories that are not mediated through one particular approach' [that of the Northern Territory Government].<sup>20</sup> He claimed that he was directed to de-accession material held in perpetuity, told to host certain exhibitions and only offer regional grants to invited applicants. It was a theme I took up further in a later publication. I had already discussed problems at the Museum in my forthcoming book

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<sup>20</sup> 'ABC News – NT Gallery Director Resigns', <http://www.abc.net.au/news/state/nt/metnt-11oct2000-8.htm>, 12 October 2000, accessed on 13 October 2000.

that was in press but Patrick's remarks prompted me during the following year to undertake further research on the issues he raised.

My colleague Alistair Heatley, with whom I worked for 17 years, died in late October. He was sometimes frustratingly difficult and I quite often disagreed with him. He could, however, also be stimulating company and he made a major contribution to teaching and research on Northern Territory political history and politics. I gave a eulogy at his crowded funeral and later wrote his *Journal of Northern Territory History* obituary.

I encountered an annoying and unnecessary distraction in mid November when the Labor Member of the House of Representatives for the Northern Territory Warren Snowdon made a statement drawing attention to the impact of Commonwealth funding cuts on Northern Territory University in which he claimed that it was no longer possible to do a History degree there. He later publicly apologised but not before I had a letter published in *The Australian* correcting his unfortunate and potentially damaging error.

Happier events before the end of the year included the launch in late November of a special centenary of Federation edition of Alan Powell's *Far Country* in the foyer of Darwin's Supreme Court building. In early December I attended the swearing in at Parliament House of the new Administrator of the Northern Territory John Anictomatis by Governor General Sir William Deane. A prominent member of Darwin's large Greek community, John proved most successful in his new role. It was an inspired appointment. A few days later I was at Parliament House again for the formal commencement of the Territory's centenary of Federation program.

Just before I left Darwin for a holiday in Sydney, University of New South Wales Press published Aedeon Cremin's edited book *1901: Australian Life at Federation, An Illustrated Chronicle*. I was much involved in it and, with others, was listed as a joint editor. Aedeon, a historical archaeologist at The University of Sydney, was a delight to work with. The book brought together contributions from across Australia. With politics very much in the background, it highlighted the contribution of ordinary people to Federation and concentrated on the material aspects of their lives: how and why they lived, what they ate, what they wore and what they chose to discard. I contributed to and supervised the chapters on Australia and the world and colonial frontiers. I also wrote

sections on the Arltunga goldfield and Darwin's Government Residence (later Government House).



**The author's photograph of Government House, Darwin in 2000 that appeared in  
*1901***

I returned to Darwin in early January 2001. Among my early tasks was teaching in the Aboriginal Pre-Arts course, designed to prepare Indigenous students for degree level studies. I much enjoyed this. In early February I spoke to the Territory's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioners about electoral politics in the Territory. I spent a weekend in mid February with Elizabeth Close in Alice Springs, where we met local National Trust members to discuss matters of concern to them. On 19 February I attended a special centenary of Federation commemoration of the first Japanese bombing on Darwin. While it was competently organised and a couple of survivors of the bombing spoke particularly well, I disagreed with it being a centenary of Federation event. I was increasingly critical of the excessive extent to which successive Territory governments emphasised the Second World War to the detriment of other historical themes, a problem that still continues.

On 28 February I was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Law, Business of Arts for a three-year term to succeed Sue Oliver, who was leaving to take up a senior Territory public service position. The deanship was internally advertised and I was one of two applicants for it. I only applied after numerous colleagues persuaded me to and did so

with considerable apprehension. Among my concerns were the workload, the stress and the extent to which the job would take me away from being a historian. I was, though, worried about the Faculty's future and hoped I could make a difference. In the vision statement that was part of my application I pointed to the need for the Dean to lead by example through excellence in teaching, research and community and industry service. I made it clear that I would not continue in the role beyond my three-year term. I took up the position on 5 February.

# intuition

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*on campus*

NTU STAFF NEWSLETTER

New Dean to take charge

**PROFESSOR David Carment was recently announced as the new Dean of the Northern Territory University Faculty of Law, Business and Arts.**

NTU Vice-Chancellor, Ron McKay, said he was pleased Professor Carment had elected to take up the position as he is a well-known and respected scholar throughout the NT and Australia.

The eminent historian has accepted a three-year term as Dean of the LBA Faculty and replaces Sue Oliver who is moving on to another position.

Professor Carment said he was looking forward to the challenging position and saw his appointment as an opportunity to "consolidate the three parts of the faculty even further".

He said he'd like to see research within the faculty expand and diversify and he intends to "look



*Professor David Carment contemplates the job before him.*

closely at the links between TAFE and Higher Education and the articulation of courses".

Outgoing Dean, Ms Oliver, said she believes Professor Carment will

make an "excellent Dean", saying he is not only "a wonderful person, but also a well-respected and informed scholar".

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **FACULTY DEAN 2001-2004**

Much of my work as Dean took me away from History and is not be dealt with here. Many matters with which I was concerned were confidential, which meant that I did not write about them to my parents. Some brief general observations, however, are necessary. Northern Territory University underwent considerable changes between 2001 and 2004 that culminated in its merger with other institutions to become Charles Darwin University. I worked closely with Vice-Chancellors Ron McKay, Ken McKinnon and Helen Garnett, and was a member of the Vice-Chancellor's Management Group. The Faculty was restructured and its priorities were revised. I was involved in securing additional funds for new initiatives in areas such as Australian Indigenous art, Communication, Governance, and Tourism. There were other areas in which the Faculty reduced its activities. I participated in a comprehensive review of subject and course offerings that aimed to produce a more efficient distribution of work and resources. A particular interest was the provision of support facilities for Indigenous students. The Faculty's links with institutions in Southeast Asia needed close attention. I pushed hard for the establishment of a Faculty research centre devoted to Asian and North Australian studies. I participated actively in implementing the 2003 agreement between my university and The Australian National University. When I took over as Dean the Faculty was in serious debt. In 2003 and 2004, though, it produced modest surpluses. Its annual budget was about \$11 million.

As the Faculty's finances gradually improved, there was also a modest improvement in the History discipline's fortunes. Bill Wilson was appointed a Lecturer in History and Politics in 2001. Christine Doran remained a staff member. Alan Powell, although retired, taught ancient history subjects. Joanne Wright, a senior staff member in Politics while on leave from a position at The University of London, jointly taught modern European history with me in 2001. History staff members and postgraduate students made significant research contributions. I continued to do some teaching, supervised doctoral and honours students, researched and wrote, was involved in community and professional activities, and was a chief investigator in various research

grants, including three from the Australian Research Council. I left the National Trust Council and the Federation of Australian Historical Societies committee but remained involved in other organisations and on advisory boards. I was President of the Australian Historical Association between 2002 and 2004.

There were various History related activities during my first semester as Dean. I continued to teach in my introductory Australian history and North Australian history subjects. In early April I guided some students around Darwin's oldest cemetery. There were regular media interviews on Territory history and politics. While visiting Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in early May I went to places of historic interest such as the national museum. During the semester I acquired as a new Honours student a prisoner serving a life sentence for murder in Berrimah prison. He was highly motivated and did some excellent work in spite of the prison environment being a far from ideal place to study. I visited him quite regularly. He was allowed to make telephone calls to me but not to use email or the Internet. During late May I was involved in the selection of Bob Catley as the foundation Professor of Governance in the Faculty. A well-known political scientist and a former federal parliamentarian, he had historical interests. It was good to see outstanding History students recognised at the first Faculty prize giving ceremony at which I presided as Dean in late May.



**The author at a Faculty prize giving ceremony in May 2001**

Following a short break in North Queensland, in late June I helped look after Bill Gammage from The Australian National University while he was in Darwin doing research for what became his critically acclaimed 2011 book *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia*. Also in late June I attended the wedding of my colleague and friend Elizabeth Desailly to Garrett Gundry at Darwin's historic wharf precinct and gave a University of the Third Age lecture on the Territory's forthcoming Legislative Assembly elections. During early July I attended a meeting that resulted in the formation of a Territory branch of the Professional Historians Association. Barbara James and Bill Wilson did much of the hard work in getting it started.

At the end of July I joined other Historical Society members on a long weekend trip to northwestern parts of the Territory that I organised. Nina Cameron and Sue Harlow were passengers in my vehicle. Bill Gammage and his wife Jan also participated. Our first two nights were spent camping at Keep River National Park. We visited various Aboriginal rock art sites, an Aboriginal hawk hunting hide and the spectacular Keep River Gorge. We then drove over 500 kilometres along isolated dirt roads, passing through lovely country and scarcely seeing any vehicles other than our own. Our last night was spent near Kalkarindji. Before beginning our journey home we viewed the old Wave Hill homestead site and the site of the strike camp established after the famous Wave Hill walk off that began in 1966 and helped lead to federal Aboriginal land rights legislation.



**Aboriginal hawk hunting hide at Keep River National Park in 2001**

At the beginning of August I was once again master of ceremonies for the Northern Territory Literary Awards presentation. I dined with Don Baker, Pat White and Don's daughter Sally, who was teaching in Darwin's rural area. I also gave a seminar about some of the Territory's museums.

I had numerous media interviews regarding the Territory election that took place on 18 August and saw, for the first time, a Labor victory. The election attracted considerable national interest. Among my interviews were two long ones for ABC Radio National. I predicted that Labor would pick up seats. The enormous swing against the Country Liberals in Darwin, however, took me by surprise despite the Country Liberals' poor campaign. I expected Clare Martin to do well as Chief Minister but had doubts about some of her colleagues in the new ministry. Bill Wilson and I later co-authored a long *Journal of Northern Territory History* article about the elections. I still stand by its conclusions.

*The Northern Territory election of 2001 was a political watershed. It was the election when the CLP, Australia's most successful political party, finally lost power. Whilst various factors played a part in the CLP's demise, it was mainly a consequence of a party having been in power for too long. The Northern Territory joined mainstream Australia. It acquired a government of the same hue of most states and the Australian Capital Territory. The emotion of election night may never be repeated; for those who participated in or observed the election, Clare Martin's claim within hours of polling of a possible mandate was the culmination of a 27-year journey for Labor.<sup>21</sup>*

My undergraduate teaching in the second semester was in my subject on modern Europe since 1870 that I co-taught with Joanne Wright, who proved a great colleague. She later became Deputy Vice-Chancellor at The University of Queensland. Among visitors in late August were Geoffrey Bolton, then at Murdoch University, Bill Bunbury, Henry Chan, an expert on the history of the Chinese in Australia, and Tom Griffiths. Geoffrey gave a seminar on North Australia and attended the annual History Colloquium

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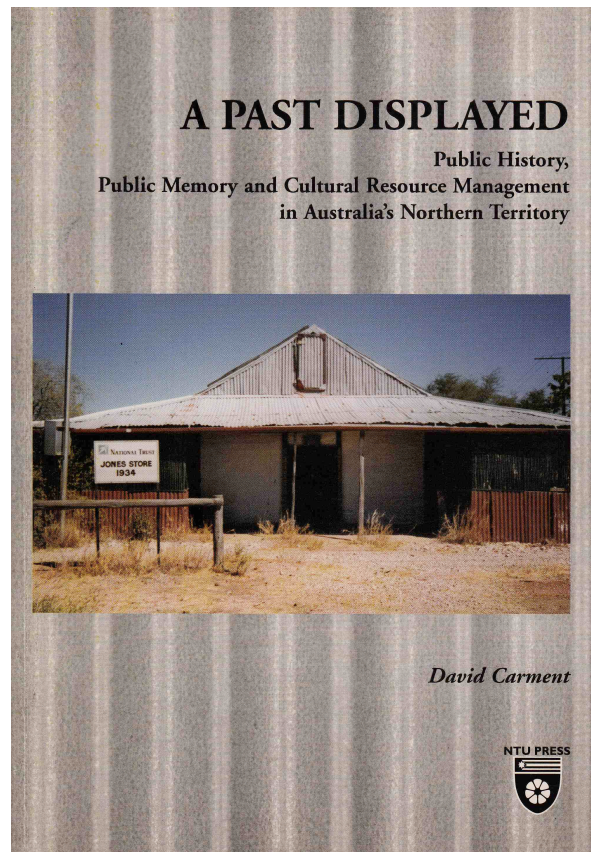
<sup>21</sup> David Carment & Bill Wilson, 'Change at the Top: The 2001 Northern Territory Election', in *Journal of Northern Territory History*, no 13, 2002, p 77.

at which Tom was the keynote speaker. Shortly afterwards I participated in a university graduation ceremony at the well-established Aboriginal community of Nauiyu near Daly River. The Ansett Airlines collapse in mid September prevented me from attending the Australia Historical Association conference in Kalgoorlie at which I was to present a paper. I tried hard but unsuccessfully to get there with Qantas and was disappointed to miss the conference. As a result of my visits to Darwin's prison at Berrimah, in late September I established links with the prison's education officer to develop cooperation with the Faculty. During early October I gave a talk on Darwin's domestic architecture to a conference of architectural historians in Darwin. My student Bernie Brian graduated with his doctorate in mid October. He wrote a much referred to thesis on the North Australian Workers Union, for many years the Territory's only trade union.

Northern Territory University Press published my book *A Past Displayed: Public, History, Public Memory and Cultural Resource Management in Australia's Northern Territory* in early October. Alan Powell launched it at the university's bookshop in early December. The book considered how individuals and communities in the Territory thought about their histories and how those histories were interpreted as part of wider strategies concerned with education, museums, national parks and tourism. Emphasis was given throughout to attitudes, memories and imagination that at the end of the twentieth century endowed the physical forms of the Territory's past with meaning. Individual chapters dealt with public history, cultural resources and the study of memory, history and cultural resource management in the Northern Territory, presenting the past at Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Parks, Northern Territory parks and reserves, the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, non-government museums, presenting heritage along the Stuart Highway, urban heritage in Darwin and the Top End, and urban heritage in Alice Springs and Central Australia. The book aimed to contribute to debates about Australians' historical consciousness. It was favourably reviewed. Ann McGrath observed that the book included 'an extremely valuable survey of the literature and issues relevant to cultural resource management' and was 'well researched and clearly written'.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol 48, no 3, 2002, pp 417-418.



During late October I joined Vice-Chancellor Ron McKay on a visit to Brunei and Malaysia that reinforced my earlier conclusions about the difficulties involved in the development of closer ties between the Northern Territory and Southeast Asia. In Brunei, which had a direct air link with Darwin, we had long sessions with the Vice-Chancellor and senior staff of Universiti Brunei Darussalam, the Minister for Education, and the Australian High Commissioner. The warm hospitality we received led us to the false conclusion that our Brunei hosts were seriously interested in greater collaboration with Northern Territory University. When, however, after my return to Darwin I took steps to follow up on specific initiatives that were discussed, including sending two senior Faculty staff members to Brunei for further negotiations, no progress was made and Universiti Brunei Darussalam no longer appeared to have any interest. Our time in Malaysia was mainly spent at Kolej Tafe Seremban, where my Faculty offered Business courses. In spite of this well-established relationship, there were numerous problems with

academic standards and cost recovery. My university later decided not to continue its Kollej Tafe agreement.

During early November, as an invited delegate, I attended the new Northern Territory Government's Economic Development Summit at Darwin's Parliament House and the nearby Chan Building. The able co-chairs were Bob Collins and Neville Walker, a prominent local business leader. Like Bob, Neville later took his own life, in his case after he experienced serious financial difficulties. We learned at the summit that the Territory's economic situation was far worse than the previous government revealed. There was an extraordinarily high level of per capita debt. Much attention was given to the need to secure a gas pipeline but education was also extensively discussed, including the desirability of a strong local university. Clare Martin undertook to fully consider the summit's findings and recommendations.



**Northern Territory Economic Development Summit delegates in 2001 – the author is fourth from the left in the second row from the back, Clare Martin (in white), Neville Walker (in the blue shirt) and Bob Collins (holding the folder) are close to the centre of the front row**

In mid November I attended the Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities conference in Melbourne. There was lively discussion on issues relating to the humanities and social sciences and I made useful contacts. Many Deans present were, like me, historians. The historian Rob Pascoe, a Dean at Victoria University, outlined the national project he was coordinating on Bachelor of Arts degrees, pointing out that in spite of growing competition these degrees remained among the most popular in Australian universities and they did well in student satisfaction surveys.

Shortly before I took some leave in mid December I had more History related activities. I attended the launch of Bill Wilson's book on the history of the Territory police that was based on his doctoral thesis. Clare Martin, who as well as being Chief Minister was Minister for Arts and Museums, met me to discuss some of my ideas on Territory museums. Immediately afterwards, I spoke at a Museums Australia hypothetical on the Museum and Art Gallery's future. I argued both to Clare and the hypothetical that the Museum needed greater funding for more comprehensive historical exhibits and greater freedom from political censorship.

One of my research projects after returning to Darwin in mid January 2002 was an *Australian Dictionary of Biography* article on Alec Fong Lim. I enjoyed the research, which included a long interview with his widow Norma. In late February Clare Martin asked me to a reception she hosted to meet the director Phil Noyce and one of the actors in the film 'Rabbit Proof Fence'. After this we attended a special showing of the film, which was well acted and beautifully photographed. It dealt with three part-Aboriginal children who escaped from a government institution in Western Australia to return to their mothers. The issues it highlighted were very much present in the Northern Territory until the 1970s. Bill Wilson and I gave a well-attended public lecture in late February on the recent Northern Territory election.

My only teaching for the first semester that started in early March was lecturing to the first year Australian history students. I caught up then with Stephen Foster, a historian I had known for many years and was working in a senior role at the National Museum of Australia. Together with Clayton Fredericksen and my doctoral student Kathy De La Rue I worked on a chapter about cultural heritage management for a book that Mickey Dewar, Suzanne Parry and Julie Wells edited about the Northern Territory during the 1950s that

appeared in 2005. In late March I chaired a meeting of the Northern Territory Library's Northern Territory Collection Consultative Committee, a role I performed between 2000 and 2004. I chaired a seminar in mid April at which Geoffrey Bolton, who was in Darwin with Bill Bunbury for a Territory history project, in which he discussed the work he was doing for a biography of Paul Hasluck. I later joined Geoffrey and Bill for dinner. Towards the end of the month and in mid May I attended meetings as part of a group examining the cultural, educational and social aspects of the Territory government's economic development strategy that Bob Collins chaired. Early in May I was at Clare Martin's opening of an exhibition on Fannie Bay's history. I also was master of ceremonies then at Bob Collins's launch of a novel based on the experiences of army drivers in the Territory during the Second World War. A particularly pleasurable task was accepting a large cheque from Darwin's Greek and Italian communities to be spent on teaching ancient history at the university.

In April 2002 my article 'Making Museum History in Australia's Northern Territory' appeared in *Australian Historical Studies*. It argued that representations of Northern Territory history at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory during the late 1990s reflected the difficulty of establishing relationships between Australian museums and the communities and governments they served. Museum and Art Gallery exhibits emphasised images promoted in the Territory's official history. In particular they reflected close links between the Northern Territory and Asia, the romance of frontier lifestyles and industries, colourful and prominent individuals and ultimately successful battles to overcome hardship and diversity. Mickey Dewar and Margaret Anderson, of the History Trust of South Australia, responded in the journal's same issue. Mickey disagreed with my principal arguments, especially my views about censorship and my interpretation of how History was constructed and presented in museums and academia. Margaret pointed to a 'determined political assault on the integrity of the museum and on historians' in Australia and elsewhere that 'was designed to direct interpretation in a particular way and repress alternative views'.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Margaret Anderson, 'Oh What a Tangled Web ... Politics, History and Museums', in *Australian Historical Studies*, no 119, 2002, p 185.

During the break between semesters in late May I travelled to Lytentye Apurte, still widely known by its former name of Santa Teresa, a small Aboriginal community on the edge of the Simpson Desert about 80 kilometres from Alice Springs. I was there to present certificates to students who had completed Music studies through my Faculty. A former Catholic mission, the well cared for community had a beautiful Spanish Mission style church and an active art centre. Catholicism remained strong. In addition to the ceremony at which I officiated, there was a concert in which the local people performed. The Associate Dean of the School of Music Adrian Walter and a fellow musician put on a classical guitar recital to an appreciative audience.



### **Lytentye Apurte (Santa Teresa) in 2002**

Shortly after my return home I participated in a day trip to historic sites in the Daly River area that Brian Reid organised. We visited the Catholic church and art centre at Nauiyu, nearby ruins of the ill-fated 1880s Jesuit mission, an old mango farm and the site of the original river landing.

I was in Alice Springs during late June to participate in a graduation ceremony and attend meetings. While there I met the Director of the Strehlow Research Centre Brett Galt-Smith to discuss possible research cooperation between the Centre and my Faculty. I had a similar conversation with senior staff members at the Institute for Aboriginal Development. I also met Minister for Central Australia Peter Toyne and one of his staff to discuss Faculty research focussing on the region. Ted Egan, highly

regarded for his historical work as well as being a popular entertainer, received an honorary doctorate at the graduation ceremony. I had known him since the early 1980s and examined his University of Adelaide Master's thesis.

An opportunity to reflect further on past and present Territory and university Southeast Asian connections came when I visited the Indonesian islands of Bali and Lombok in late June. One purpose of the short trip was to support my Faculty's Indonesian in-country language program at Universitas Mataram in Lombok that was experiencing difficulties due to the emergence of a Darwin-based competitor. While In Lombok I also met Universitas Mataram's Rector Mansur Ma'shum and some of his senior staff to discuss a proposed memorandum of cooperation between their university and Northern Territory University. Further progress on this was, unfortunately, delayed because of the 'Bali bombing' later that year. Despite Lombok's closeness to Darwin, it was evident that the Rector did not believe Northern Territory University was any better placed for a special relationship with his institution than other Australian universities that already had formal agreements with it. I was wonderfully looked after in Lombok, which I found especially attractive. Universitas Mataram staff members took me to lunch in a traditional restaurant and to Mataram's museum. In Bali I discussed the possibility of Northern Territory University study tours with former Faculty staff member Tom Hunter who was based there.



**The author with Universitas Mataram staff members in 2002**

I was in Brisbane during early July for the excellent Australian Historical Association conference that Regina Ganter from Griffith University convened. Among issues the conference considered were 'black armband' history, refugee and immigration policies, the Anzac tradition and globalisation. Attention was also given to Australia's place within its wider region. Griffith University's Vice-Chancellor Glyn Davis opened the conference with an insightful address in which he called on historians to take a prominent role in public debate. Julia Martinez from The University of Wollongong gave an excellent paper on Aboriginal and Chinese sporting stories in Darwin. I was elected the Association's President for a two year term, being the first and so far the only Northern Territory historian to occupy the position. When initially approached to accept nomination for the position I feared that my Dean's responsibilities would leave me with insufficient time for it. In discussing this with Ron McKay, he strongly encouraged me to take on the role and generously provided university funding to significantly increase the weekly hours of the Association's administrative officer Robyn Arrowsmith, who was based at Macquarie University.

I returned to Malaysia in late July for meetings at Kolej Tafe Seremban and to represent the Vice-Chancellor at a graduation ceremony at which Northern Territory University awards were presented. It was increasingly clear that the relationship between my university and Kolej Tafe was far from satisfactory. The Kolej's enrolments had declined quite dramatically. Recent reports in the Malaysian media about 'criminal' activities of some Kolej students did not help. There was a large post-school education supplement in *The Star* newspaper during my visit that indicated how intensely competitive the Malaysian tertiary education market was.

During late July I guided a Historical Society trip that concentrated on the area between Newcastle Waters and the Karlu Karlu/Devils Marbles Conservation Reserve. After looking at the historic buildings at Newcastle Waters, we stayed at Banka Banka Station, where the old homestead precinct was used for accommodation and camping. After dinner we attended a slide show on the station's history. It was one of the Territory's oldest pastoral properties and was picturesquely situated. At Tennant Creek on the following day we visited the historic telegraph station buildings before going to the Battery Hill mining complex, the 1930s Catholic church, the National Trust museum

and various other historic places in the town. We then drove on to Karlu Karlu/Devils Marbles Conservation Reserve to camp. A large collection of imposing boulders, it was a sacred place for its Aboriginal traditional owners. A blazing fire kept us warm during a cold night.



**Brian and Lyn Reid at Karlu Karlu/Devils Marbles Conservation Reserve in 2002**

My undergraduate teaching during the second semester comprised lectures in the subject on Europe from the French Revolution to 1870. During the first teaching week I attended a reception at Government House during which Administrator John Anictonatis launched a Historical Society book on the Northern Territory in 1901 that included my chapter on Territory buildings. Xavier Pons was back in Darwin as a Visiting Professor and I enjoyed seeing him and Geraldine on various occasions. The History Colloquium in mid August went well. My cousin Diana Wood Conroy, a senior Visual Arts academic at The University of Wollongong, stayed with me during her first trip to Darwin since 1974.

It was interesting to hear her speak about how the city had altered. She productively re-visited Bathurst Island, where she coordinated Tiwi Designs in 1974. I saw Peter Read again, in Darwin for a conference, in late August. I also attended then the enjoyable joint 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party for Elizabeth Desailly, Clare Martin and Fran Welke, Adrian's wife.

I re-visited the Victoria River District with Alan Powell at the end of August and the beginning of September, following the Humbert and Wickham Gribble tracks. On the latter, a distance of almost 100 kilometres, we only saw one other vehicle. Before the creation of Gregory National Park the tracks passed through cattle country. Smaller operators used them to muster stray cattle that became the basis of new herds. Among the historic sites that the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission interpreted along the tracks were stockyards made of either stone or timber.



### **Stockyard on the Wickham Gribble Track in 2002**

In early September I participated in the official re-opening of the National Archives of Australia office in Darwin that was extensively refurbished. Together with a few others, I read aloud from some material in the Archives. On the following day as President of the Australian Historical Association I had a long and useful meeting with the Archives' Acting Director General Anne-Marie Schwirtlich. Another pleasurable occasion was in mid September when I attended an investiture at Government House to

see Bill Wilson received a well-deserved Order of Australia Medal. Shortly after that I was at the launch of Nicholas Jose's book on Roger Jose (they were not related), *Black Sheep: Journey to Borroloola*. Nicholas discussed the project with me during his research. The launch was by the author Roger McDonald, whom I had known for many years.

I returned to work in early October after a short holiday in New Zealand to find that the university had a new Vice-Chancellor, Ken McKinnon. Ron McKay left quite suddenly due to serious ill health but prior to that was under pressure to go from the new Northern Territory Government. He died aged only 59 in 2006. A former Vice-Chancellor of The University of Wollongong, Ken proved a dynamic leader. I found him wonderful to work with. He was decisive, good at securing additional funds, had little tolerance for unnecessary red tape and paperwork, and possessed a clear and exciting vision for the university in which the humanities and social sciences had key roles. He was particularly adept at establishing beneficial relationships with community groups, politicians and other tertiary education institutions. His appointment was until a new Vice-Chancellor was chosen but, fortunately for the university, he was in the job for over a year.

During mid October I attended the Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities meeting in Townsville. It was a useful get together but did not, from my point of view, start well when James Cook University's Vice-Chancellor claimed that his was Australia's only tropical university engaged in research that was relevant to tropical Australia. A pre-publication version of the report that Rob Pascoe, Stuart Macintyre, John Ainley and Jim Williamson wrote on humanities and social sciences degrees in Australia, *The Lettered Country*, was presented. It was especially interesting on teaching practices and the impact of new technologies. I was interviewed for the report and it referred to my far from original view that the best lectures were accomplished summaries of particular topics and my enthusiasm for museums as teaching resources.

At the end of October I travelled to Canberra for a meeting of the Australian Historical Association/National Archives of Australia Reference Group. Anne-Marie Schwirtlich and some of her senior staff were present as well as other Australian

Historical Association representatives. The meeting covered issues concerned with collection building, access and collaborative projects.

Also in late October I attended Alan Powell's public lecture on how the bombing of Darwin was interpreted. In late November I went to the Northern Territory launch at Government House of the *Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens*. Anita Angel wrote some entries as its principal Northern Territory contributor. In early December I took part in an exhausting but stimulating university planning retreat at Jabiru. Among the key points to emerge were the desirability of a merger with other Territory tertiary education institutions to create a new university, the need for an institute of advanced studies comprising outstanding researchers and a formal agreement with The Australian National University. Back in Darwin I attended a meeting chaired by Bob Collins dealing with research cooperation between the university and the Territory government.

During my leave in Sydney from mid December 2002 to late January 2003 I chaired an Australian Historical Association executive meeting at Macquarie University and, at Ken McKinnon's request, visited Malcolm Gillies, The Australian National University's Deputy Vice-Chancellor, to discuss the proposed agreement between our two universities. Malcolm was most helpful. I saw much of him over the following year. My visit to Canberra was shortly before the devastating bush fires in parts of the city. After returning from leave I was in Canberra again on 28 January as a member of a delegation to pursue the agreement further. There were proposals in areas such as Music and Strategic Studies. I could also see useful possibilities in History.

I was in Darwin on Australia Day when my Member of the Order of Australia award was officially announced. The citation mentioned my services 'as an advocate for the protection of Northern Territory cultural heritage' and 'to the scholarship and dissemination of knowledge of Northern Territory history'.<sup>24</sup> I was both surprised and delighted when I first learned about the award in the previous November. Many people generously congratulated me. My parents were particularly pleased and, together with good friends, attended the Government House investiture on 14 May.

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<sup>24</sup> It's an Honour – Search Australian Honours, [http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au/honours/honour\\_roll/search.cfm?aus\\_award\\_id=1042165&search\\_type=quick&showind=true](http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au/honours/honour_roll/search.cfm?aus_award_id=1042165&search_type=quick&showind=true), accessed 20 February 2015.



**Jan Moore, Anita Angel, David Angel, Maxwell Carment, Alan Powell, the author, Diana Carment, Suzanne Parry, Rosemary Britto, Elizabeth Desailly and John Anictomatis at Government House, Darwin in 2003**

I was in Canberra again in mid February for a meeting of the Editorial Advisory Board of the series *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy* to which the Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Downer appointed me in my capacity as Australian Historical Society President. The chair David Sadleir was a former ambassador. Other members present included the controversial author and commentator Gerard Henderson and Tony Eggleton. Most of the discussion at this and subsequent meetings was about priorities for the next volumes in the documents series. I visited The Australian National University later that day for a fruitful discussion with Australian Dictionary of Biography staff members on an Australian Research Council grant application in which I was involved as a chief investigator. I was once more in Canberra a couple of weeks later for a reference group meeting at the National Archives.

The first month or so of the first semester proved particularly busy as Ken McKinnon gave me numerous and varied tasks concerned with the development of a new university. Among them was a visit to Alice Springs in mid March for discussions at Centralian College about its proposed merger with Northern Territory University. I also lectured to the introductory Australian history students. Another priority was working closely with the able Director of the Faculty's new Centre for North Australian and Asian Research the sociologist Gary Robinson to ensure that it was properly established. I was glad to learn in late April that Sylvia Kleinert, a highly respected art historian with Northern Territory experience at The Australian National University and with whom I later worked closely, accepted the new Faculty position of Associate Professor in Australian Indigenous Art.

Like the many others who knew her, I was greatly saddened to learn of Barbara James's death on 31 March after a difficult battle with cancer. She was a journalist, a political activist, an environmentalist and a key figure in numerous community organisations. I valued her as a generous friend and fellow Northern Territory historian for whom I had enormous respect. Her funeral at Darwin's Christ Church Cathedral, which I attended, attracted hundreds of mourners. Bob Collins, Clare Martin and her former sister in law Wendy James gave moving eulogies.

It was announced on 9 April that legislation would be enacted later in the year creating Charles Darwin University, the result of a merger between Northern Territory University and Centralian College and a less direct link with the Menzies School of Health Research. There would be an Institute of Advanced Studies within the new university. There was some controversy about the name, for which Ken McKinnon pushed hard. I agreed with the Vice-Chancellor. While Charles Darwin never visited the Northern Territory, the Territory's capital was named after him. More importantly he made an enormous and mainly positive contribution to understanding humankind. By abandoning the name Northern Territory University, Ken correctly believed that the new institution should have aspirations that went far beyond the Territory. If the Territory ever became a state, the university's name would have to change anyway (although some prominent people still illogically argued that there could be a 'State of the Northern Territory').

I was by early 2003 also being kept busy by my Australian Historical Association responsibilities, some of which have already been mentioned. A key priority for me, as it was for my predecessor Jill Roe, was to help ensure that the Association was seen as the organisation for all historians in Australia rather than as one principally directed at historians of Australia. I wanted it, as well, to serve some of the needs of public historians and schoolteachers. Specific matters requiring attention included forthcoming conferences, Heads of History meetings, the role of affiliates, relations with cultural institutions such as the National Archives of Australia and the National Library of Australia, postgraduate students' needs, awards and prizes, a review of the National Museum of Australia, and relations with historians outside academia. Perhaps the most important decision was to replace the Association's *Bulletin* with the new journal *History Australia*. Marian Quartly was its editor. It would be available in both online and print formats. Another major initiative was preparation a report on History curricula. Robyn Arrowsmith greatly assisted me in my work.

During early May I was involved in the selection of the foundation Professor of Communication in my Faculty. The position went to Ian Buchanan, an outstanding researcher at Monash University, who arrived later in the year. The university's agreement with the Australian National University was signed in late May. On the same day, as an initiative that was part of the agreement, the first Charles Darwin Symposium took place. Clare Martin opened it with a speech that was mainly about her government's revived statehood campaign, a topic that I later wrote about. In late June and early July I did interviews for ABC radio and television on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of self-government in the Territory. Also in early July I attended the ceremony at which Ken McKinnon and Clare Martin signed the Northern Territory University-Northern Territory Government Cooperation Agreement. I learned shortly after then that the university's new Vice-Chancellor would be Helen Garnett, Director of the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation. She took up her appointment in October. My first impression of her when she made a brief visit in mid July was that she was energetic and personable. At the end of July I took part in a Historical Society trip to Limestone Gorge and Bullita Homestead, where we were able to look at its impressive new interpretation centre.



### **Interpretation centre at Bullita Homestead in 2003**

I was in Canberra during mid August. I attended meetings there with historians at The Australian National University, the outcome of which was that the 2003 History Colloquium would be a Charles Darwin University-Australian National University activity. At his request I met John Ritchie, who retired in the previous year as General Editor of the Australian Dictionary of Biography and wanted me to apply for this position when it was advertised. I also caught up with David Headon, who was now much involved in writing about Canberra's history. The trip's main purpose was for me and other Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities to attend the National Arts Research Showcase at Parliament House. This included meetings with federal politicians and research presentations. I also met Malcolm Gillies again to discuss some detailed issues regarding the agreement with his university.

While in Canberra I had the opportunity as Australian Historical Association President to discuss in some detail the National Museum review report that was released in mid July. Graeme Davison initially alerted me to the key issues some months earlier. The Association joined him in expressing strong concern to the Chairman of the Museum's Council Tony Staley that none of the members of the review group was a historian of standing. The review panel, however, interviewed both Jill Roe and me. While the report did not endorse media claims regarding systemic political or cultural bias in the Museum, it called for significant changes in the Museum's representation of Australia's post-1788 past. Former Museum Council member Tom Stannage was, as a

Dean at Curtin University, in Canberra for the same reason as me. He was worried about possible changes resulting from the National Museum review that he believed threatened the integrity of its historical exhibits. Tom arranged for me to join him and Mat Trinca, a Program Manager at the Museum (later its Director), to discuss the review's implications. The Australian Historical Association disagreed with the supposed need for major changes to the Museum's representation of post-1788 history and carefully monitored developments there.

At the end of October I attended the Australian Historical Association conference in Mildura's Grand Hotel, delightfully situated near the Murray River. Convened by Dianne Kirkby of La Trobe University, it was well run and had a good attendance. Postgraduate students gave many of the best papers. I presented a paper on cultural heritage management in the Northern Territory during the 1950s. As 2003 was the Association's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, past Presidents were invited. The second President, Bruce Mansfield of Macquarie University, gave an address and David Walker delivered a thoughtful and entertaining anniversary lecture on 'Australia, Asia and Cultural Anxiety'. I also chaired the Annual General Meeting. As I later wrote in the first issue of *History Australia*, the conference showed that history in Australia was healthier and more diverse than some media reports, especially from critics like Greg Melleuish of The University of Wollongong and Keith Windschuttle, argued. A conference session on 'Writing Australian History; Fact or Fabrication?' revealed how sections of the media crudely misrepresented Lyndall Ryan of The University of Newcastle in her work on the history of Tasmanian Aborigines. Lyndall criticised the Australian Historical Association's Executive for not defending her when she was under attack earlier in the year. I acknowledged that the Association lacked procedures or protocols for dealing adequately with such situations but foreshadowed that it would develop these. I also emphasised the need for historians to consider new strategies that took advantage of widespread community interest in history yet allowed for better media coverage of historians' findings and views.

Charles Darwin University came into official existence on 1 October. I remained as Dean until the expiry of my term the following year. The Faculty acquired additional staff members who previously worked at Centralian College. Helen Garnett commenced

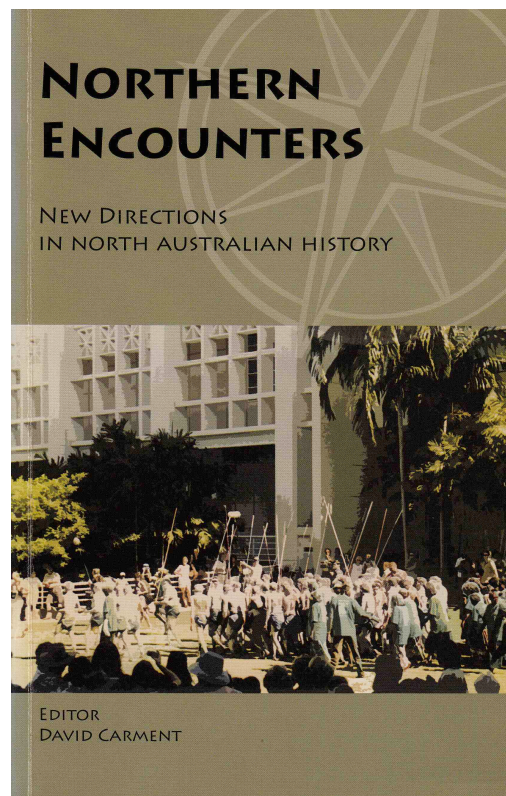
as Vice-Chancellor on 10 October. She was business like, capable and forthright. I attended the farewell for John Anictomatis on 29 October. His successor as Administrator was Ted Egan. I was in Canberra again for meetings at the National Archives and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in early November. I had a most productive discussion there with The Australian National University's Beryl Rawson, a former Australian Historical Association President, regarding a major prize she was donating to the Association in honour of her late husband the historian Allan Martin. In mid November I participated in a forum that I helped organise for the Centre for North Australian and Asian Research. It discussed research proprieties and possible funding sources. I was also at a function then where Ted Egan launched a scholarship for History and Politics students at the university in honour of Barbara James. I attended a meeting in Darwin during this same period with the new Director General of the National Archives Ross Gibbs.

I convened the 2003 History Colloquium on 22 and 23 November. A joint Charles Darwin University/The Australian National University initiative under the new agreement between the two universities, it was particularly well attended. The theme was 'New Directions in North Australian History'. Presentations were of a high standard. Postgraduate students made notable contributions. All but one paper, that was published elsewhere, appeared in my edited 2004 Charles Darwin University Press book *Northern Encounters: New Directions in North Australian History*. There was also a book launch and a dinner. Ann McGrath, Director of the new Australian Centre for Indigenous History at The Australian National University, gave the keynote address on inventing a History tradition in the Northern Territory in which she eloquently concluded:

*Amidst the ashes of colonial and cyclonic devastation, community and archival loss, Territory histories have this re-emerged – like Phoenix – with renewed vigour. Territory historians have long recognised the importance of landscape and remnant material culture to the archive and to history. Northern historians have played a special role in searching for new kinds of archives and new kinds of narratives. In considering what sort of community northern history will reflect and project into the future, the story might well be one that extends beyond the shores of the Arafura Sea – one that reaches north, east,*

*west and south. With its highly socially integrated historical practice and School of Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems, perhaps it is the north that will point the way towards a negotiated history, an inclusive history, and an expansive history – a history that might lead to the kind of future community that northern people, and possibly Australians more generally, would hope to inhabit.*<sup>25</sup>

Topics of other presentations included the Coniston Massacre of 1928, race relations in far north Queensland, water development and pastoralism in the Northern Territory, perceptions of North Australian women during the 1870s, the historian as traveller in Queensland's Cape York Peninsula, cross-cultural commemoration of early contact in the Northern Territory, the role of special library collections in the Northern Territory, Charles Darwin University Library's Arafura Digital Archive, the penitentiary as a museum in Alice Springs and Darwin, and place, memory and identities reflected in art.



<sup>25</sup> Ann McGrath, 'The History Phoenix? Inventing a History Tradition in the Northern Territory', in David Carment (ed), *Northern Encounters: New Directions in North Australian History*, Charles Darwin University Press, Darwin, 2004, pp 17-18.

An Australian Historical Association Executive meeting in Sydney on 19 December discussed at length the Association's responsibility towards members attacked in the media. We acknowledged that the Association was not charged, as was its United States counterpart, with maintaining standards in the discipline. It was not a trade union. Its recently adopted code of conduct, however, emphasised the need for fairness and honesty. We decided that in circumstances where it was clear that its members were being unfairly or dishonestly criticised in the media the Association had an obligation to publicly defend them. It could not take sides in scholarly debates otherwise.

It was not long before a situation arose where an Association response was necessary. In an article in *The Australian* on 29 December 2003 Keith Windschuttle again argued that well-known historians of Aboriginal-European relations in colonial Tasmania dishonestly based their findings on dubious political motives. In a letter to *The Australian*, which the newspaper chose not to print but was sent to all members of the H-ANZAU email discussion list, I pointed out that there was no deliberate fabrication of the type Windschuttle described. I argued that the scholars he criticised had in good faith assessed the evidence available to them and, as was common in historical studies, reached a range of opinions. It was, I suggested, time that *The Australian* gave more attention to what historians were really saying.

On a more positive note, *History Australia*'s first issue appeared in December and attracted widespread praise. Marian Quartly did an outstanding job in producing an issue that included a wide range of scholarly articles, contributions to debates, reviews, a conference address, conference reports, notices on forthcoming conferences, a departmental report and various Australian Historical Association matters. When launching the journal in February 2004 Jill Roe rightly noted that it was 'full of interesting and valuable material'. The idea, she continued, 'that maybe one day the association would have its own journal has quite a history... Today the profession and its productivity have expanded so greatly there is plenty of room for another quality journal. So we expect *HA* will expand and strengthen the field'.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Jill Roe, 'Launching History Australia: The Jill Roe Festschrift, Macquarie University, 11 February 2004', in *History Australia*, vol 1, no 2, July 2001, pp 319-320.

In mid February 2004, having returned to work in January after a period of leave, I attended a workshop at The Australian National University in Canberra on state and territory political leadership in Australia. It brought together academics from around Australia to present papers based on their draft chapters for the University of New South Wales Press book *Yes Premier: Labor Leadership in Australia's States and Territories* being edited by John Wanna of The Australian National University and Paul Williams of Griffith University. From 2002 and for the first time since 1901 the Australian Labor Party held all state and territory governments in Australia. My own paper and chapter were on Clare Martin. Once completed the chapter was a substantial piece of work of about 8000 words that considered the Chief Minister's background and beliefs, how she won power in 2001, her decision-making, her role as a policy broker, and her crisis management. It argued that following her electoral victory Clare established a clear dominance in the Territory that was a consequence of her being highly articulate, committed, personable and energetic. She used her power to implement a lot of the agenda she presented to electors in 2001. I also, though, warned that the willingness of many Territory electors to change government in 2001 might indicate a new volatility that could easily send Clare and her party back into opposition and she needed to take great care to not offend key interest groups. The book appeared in May 2005, which allowed me to update my chapter and include information from my interview with the Chief Minister in March 2004. I was and remain reasonably pleased with the chapter but at least one reader, the well-known Darwin journalist Paul Toohey, felt I was insufficiently critical. He emailed me that the chapter was hagiography.

I was in Canberra once more in early March. While there I met Ann McGrath to discuss Charles Darwin University involvement in a study tour to the Northern Territory that she was organising later in the year. I also attended a meeting of the Australian Historical Association/National Archives of Australia Reference Group. We were given a special tour of the Archives' most recent exhibition that dealt with animals in the Commonwealth Public Service. On the same day the historian Susan Marsden interviewed me for the National Library. She did a second part of the interview in Darwin during July.

My remaining time as Dean was partly occupied with the usual activities. I also dealt with significant changes to the Faculty's structure that Helen Garnett decided were necessary as part of a wider restructuring across the entire university. She and many others kindly attended my farewell as Dean on 3 March. I was presented with the Aboriginal artist Billy Benn's most attractive print of Harts Range in Central Australia that is now in the front hall of my Sydney home. Adrian Walter, Head of the new School of Creative Arts and Humanities, took over as acting Dean until a permanent replacement for me, the lawyer Eugene Clark from The University of Canberra, was later appointed. Immediately on leaving the Dean's job I reverted to being Professor of History and began a period of study leave that extended until the beginning of the second semester.

I do not regret my decision to seek the Dean's position but sometimes wonder if I should have changed my mind and sought reappointment to it. Ken McKinnon and Helen Garnett warned me that I might find it difficult to readjust to my previous role. It was partly for that reason and following further encouragement from John Ritchie that shortly before I finished as Dean I applied for the advertised position of General Editor of the Australian Dictionary of Biography at The Australian National University. Much as I liked Darwin, I was also fond of Canberra and was seriously considering as a place to which I might eventually retire. If my application was unsuccessful there was still much in Darwin for me to do. That proved to be the case but, as the next chapter shows, unexpected family developments meant that I left rather earlier than I anticipated and decided to live in neither Canberra nor Darwin.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **ENDINGS 2004-2015**

I continued to work at Charles Darwin University until May 2008. I moved to a fractional appointment in March 2006 so that I could spend most of my time in Sydney helping to look after my father following my mother's unexpected death in December 2005. I returned to teaching Australian, North Australian and modern European history and continued my postgraduate supervision. Four of the doctoral students I supervised graduated between 2004 and 2008. I was a chief investigator for four successful large grant applications, including one from the Australian Research Council. My own research focussed on the related topics of politics and identity in the Northern Territory between 1978 and 2001 and Northern Territory statehood. I also completed my chapter on Clare Martin. I remained Secretary of the Historical Society until March 2006 and President of the Australian Historical Association until July 2004.

Life was rather quieter during my study leave, which was mostly spent in Darwin working on my Northern Territory politics and identity project. This brought together, revised and added to research undertaken over many years. My aim was to explore in a short book how the Country Liberal Party during its long period of rule in the Territory created strong notions of local identity and loyalty among often transient non-Indigenous residents. Particular issues that I considered were moves for the achievement of full statehood, strategies promoting rapid economic development, opposition to Aboriginal land rights and forceful criticism of Commonwealth governments in Canberra. The challenge was to establish and then maintain the Territory's legitimacy as a distinct entity. I selectively considered key episodes, many of which had wider national implications, in the frequently controversial attempts to meet that challenge. An issue of particular interest was how historical memory was institutionalised and understood in the Territory during the 1978-2001 period.

There were other activities. In early April I attended a reception at Government House for visiting archives directors from all parts of Australia who were meeting in Darwin. I also went to a social function that marked the first anniversary of Barbara James's death. I began a weekly segment on ABC local radio in Darwin on 'Northern

Territory History from A to Z'. For 'A' I spoke about Hilda Abbott, wife of Administrator Aubrey Abbott and for 'B' the town of Batchelor. I continued along similar lines until the alphabet was completed later in the year. I enjoyed working with the compere Annie Gustin on this. My work was briefly disrupted in mid April when I travelled to Adelaide for laser surgery on one of my eyes. In late April I attended the launch by the Lord Mayor of Darwin Peter Adamson of my doctoral student Kathy De La Rue's book *The Evolution of Darwin: A History of the Northern Territory's Capital City During the Years of South Australian Administration* that Charles Darwin University Press published. Kathy's thesis, which she successfully completed in 2014, continued Darwin's story until 1978. Over the May Day long weekend I travelled to Kakadu National Park with Brian and Lyn Reid. We walked in the Muirella Park vicinity. Philip Freier had me to dinner during the same period to meet the visiting James Cook University historian Noel Loos, biographer of Aboriginal activist Eddie Mabo.



#### **The author's Charles Darwin University office in 2004**

I took some leave during May to accompany my parents on a holiday in Tasmania. While I was there I travelled to Canberra for a day to be interviewed for the Australian Dictionary of Biography position. I thought the interview went reasonably but Dianne Langmore, who was acting in the General Editor's position, got the job. She had done well as acting General Editor and was a fine historian so, while disappointed, I did not disagree with the decision to appoint her.

The remainder of my study leave sped by too quickly. In early June I attended some sessions of a symposium at the university on Darwin as a ‘creative tropical city’. In mid June I returned to my former Rockhampton workplace, now Central Queensland University, to review its History program. I found this was in pretty good shape. It had four well-qualified staff members, a range of teaching subjects and solid research outcomes.

Shortly after returning to Darwin I drove to Muirella Park in Kakadu National Park where I camped two nights with the Reids, Helen Garnett, her husband David, and the university’s newly arrived Professor of Tropical Knowledge Stephen Garnett. The next day we did the six and a half hour Barrk Walk over the top of and around Nourlangie. The scenery, flora and fauna were all fascinating. The first part of the walk involved a steep climb but the rest was easier.



**Lyn Reid, Helen Garnett and Stephen Garnett at Nourlangie in 2004**

Australian Historical Association issues continued to take some of my time during the first half of 2004. Work proceeded in earnest for the 2005 International Congress of Historical Sciences in Sydney that the Association was to host. Martyn Lyons of The University of New South Wales, the Association's Vice-President, took a special responsibility for this while Rae Frances of the same university was convening an Association conference in conjunction with the congress. Mark Peel and Carly Millar from Monash University completed their extensive curricula report. A second issue of *History Australia* appeared that included my report on History at Charles Darwin University. Due to the Association's representations important materials from the Department of Immigration's library in Canberra were not dispersed as originally intended and a large collection of Japanese company records in the National Archives of Australia was retained. The new Kay Daniels Award, the Allan Martin Award and the Magarey Medal were all approved.

I attended the Association's well-supported annual conference in Newcastle in early July. Largely due to David Lemmings's efforts, it was a great success. One would not, however, have thought so from Ean Higgins's article in *The Australian*, which argued that 'fear and loathing' of Keith Windschuttle 'lurked the corridors' of the conference and the Association 'spent virtually an entire day trying to deal with the menace'.<sup>27</sup> Windschuttle and his work certainly received some attention during the conference and the associated Heads of History meeting but a great deal less than Higgins indicated. The conference and meeting covered a diverse range of topics, showing that there was no orthodoxy of the type Higgins and Windschuttle believed existed. Bob Carr, the Premier of New South Wales and a keen promoter of History, officially opened the conference. My presidential address, later published in *History Australia*, was on 'History, Identity and Politics'. Under that deliberately broad heading I discussed recent developments in the discipline before relating them to my research in progress on identity and politics in the Northern Territory. I concluded with comments on the Australian Historical Association's role. My address finished by quoting Prime Minister John Howard's 1996 statement to Liberal students in 1996 'that winning back of ideas, that winning back of history is tremendously important'. I contended that historians should

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<sup>27</sup> *The Australian*, 22 July 2004.

not ignore such declarations. The conference, I hoped, could ‘make a significant contribution to understanding the use and misuse in influencing notions of identity in Australia and elsewhere’.<sup>28</sup> At the annual General Meeting on 7 July I handed over the presidency to Ros Pesman from The University of Sydney but remained on the Executive as Immediate Past President.

On returning to Darwin in mid July I devoted most of my attention to preparing for the new semester. I also dined with visiting historians Michele Langfield from Deakin University and Libby Robin from The Australian National University. During late July I enjoyed a Historical Society trip that concentrated on the Kununurra-Wyndham area in Western Australia. While in Kununurra I caught up with Bill Bunbury and Geoffrey Bolton, who were there for research, and attended a lecture they gave at the local library. My classes, which commenced in the last week of July, were first year subjects on Australia and modern Europe. During the same week I attended a farewell for Suzanne Parry. She was leaving her position as Head of the School of Education at the university to become Director of the Teacher Registration Board in the Territory.

I took part in a rather different historical activity during early to mid August when I was involved the Narrating Frontier Families in Australia and North America program. The Australian National University, Charles Darwin University, Yale University, the United States Embassy and the National Museum of Australia sponsored this. The Northern Territory component of the program resulted from communications involving Ann McGrath, the Head of my university’s School of Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems Sonia Smallacombe and me. Sonia, a historian, and colleagues from her School did much of the detailed organisation while Ann conceived the program, obtained funding, supervised all aspects of what was to happen and negotiated the collaborative arrangements. Some of the Program participants, who included historians from Canberra, Darwin and the United States, began their Territory experiences with a guided tour of Darwin historic sites that I conducted. On the next day there was welcome from Darwin’s Larrakia traditional owners and a briefing. Following that there was a well-attended symposium at the university on ‘Exchanging Histories’. I contributed to it by

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<sup>28</sup> David Carment, ‘History, Identity and Politics: Australian Historical Association Presidential Address 2004’, in *History Australia*, vol 2, no 1, December 2004, p 17-8.

speaking on cultural heritage management in the Territory. Later on the same day we were all guests at Government House, where Ted Egan gave us a guided tour. Ted and Clara Sue Kidwell, an Indigenous historian from The University of Oklahoma, were speakers at the dinner that night. On the next day 17 of us began a four-day study tour of the Top End.

The tour included meetings with staff and students at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Education, meetings with representatives of the Jawoyn Association and Fred Hollows Foundation in Katherine, discussions with Aboriginal rangers at the Nitmiluk Cultural Centre and Kakadu National Park headquarters, and a meeting with the Gunjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation's Chief Executive Officer Justin O'Brien at Jabiru in which he explained the Mirar people's story. We also viewed rock art, did the boat tours at Katherine Gorge and Cooina and watched the sunset from Ubirr. Wonderland Productions for The Australian National University in early 2006 released the film *A Frontier Conversation* about the Territory component of the Narrating Frontier Families program. With Ann McGrath as narrator, it highlighted key themes such as cultural appropriation, land rights, the use of language and art and 'what history means to Indigenous communities in the current climate of cultural reclamation and survival'.<sup>29</sup> The film was much used as an educational resource.



**Justin O'Brien addressing 'Narrating Frontier Families' study tour participants at Jabiru in 2004**

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<sup>29</sup> *A Frontier Conversation*, back cover of compact disc, 2006.

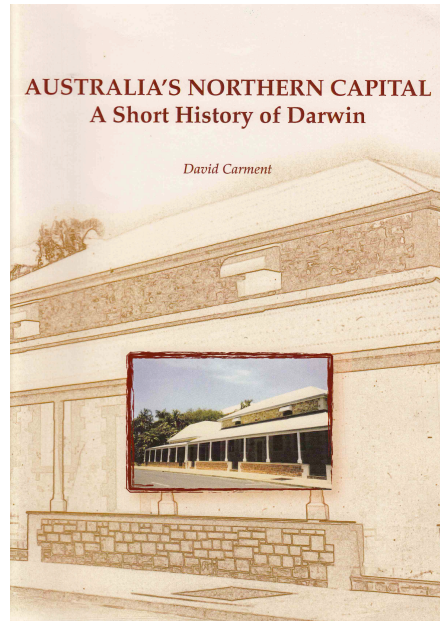
My role as a political commentator resulted in me chairing a debate involving the Country Liberal, Labor, Greens and Australian Democrats candidates for the Darwin based federal electorate of Solomon in mid September. There was a good crowd and all candidates spoke competently although predictably. During the same week I chaired a public seminar at the university on the implications of the recent bombing attack at the Australian embassy in Djakarta. The annual History Colloquium in early October went well. The Australian National University funded two participants, Kirsty Douglas and Tiffany Shellam, both of whom stayed with me and made excellent presentations. I spoke about my Clare Martin research. Also in early October I attended a graduation ceremony at which two of my doctoral students received their degrees. Eve Gibson wrote her thesis on land use and planning in the Darwin suburb of Fannie Bay while Christine Gordon's thesis dealt with the Catholic Church and the status of women at Ports Keats mission between 1935 and 1948. I enjoyed a weekend at Coinda with Brian and Lyn Reid, and Alan Powell and his wife Jan Moore during mid November. At the end of the month I had a long session with consultants planning a historical centre in the Darwin port area. Bill Bunbury spoke well about his oral history project on Cyclone Tracy at a public lecture I went to in early December.

On returning to work after my usual Christmas-New Year break, in mid January 2005 I completed another Northern Territory political chronicle and started on an article about urban meeting places in Darwin that later appeared in the journal *Historic Environment*. I also had lunch with Virginia Watson, a visiting historian from University of Technology Sydney. The next month or so was mainly occupied in preparing for teaching that started at the beginning of March. My subjects included a new one on the politics of the past. Towards the end of February I attended a Historical Society lecture by Maisie Austin, the author of a beautifully written book on growing up in Darwin during the 1950s and 1960s. She spoke about the history of her Aboriginal/Asian/European family. I was sad to learn of Arch Grant's death in late February. He made important contributions to scholarship on the Territory's religious history. In late March I was presented with a Fellowship of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies. At the end of April I attended the first of many meetings of the Cultural Tourism Working Group for the annual Garma Festival that took place in

northeast Arnhem Land later in the year. Probably Australia's most significant Indigenous event, Garma usually attracted over a thousand participants and focussed on cultural practice and cross learning. It particularly celebrated the Yolngu people's culture. I spent the May Day long weekend on a camping trip in Litchfield National Park with Brian and Lyn Reid, and Jan Hills. Among other places, we visited the former Bamboo Creek tin mine and the former Blyth Homestead. In mid May the Historical Society published my *Australia's Northern Capital: A Short History of Darwin*. It was a heavily illustrated but cheaply produced non-academic text designed for visitors and local residents seeking a brief overview of the city's past. I attended a graduation ceremony in late May at which my student Bev Phelts, who was also very active in the Historical Society, received her doctorate for a thesis on water's role in the economic development of the Territory.



**Former Blyth Homestead in 2005**



During late May and early June I did numerous media interviews about the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly election that was held on 18 June. The Martin government was returned with a greatly increased majority. Among the Country Liberals who lost their seats was the Leader of the Opposition and former Chief Minister Denis Burke. I enjoyed helping to look after the visiting Cultural Attaché from the United States Embassy in Australia Rob Hughes and his anthropologist wife in mid June. Later in the month I met another Knight descendant and his wife at a pleasant Government House morning tea that Ted Egan organised. During late June I went camping with Alan Powell at Maguk in Kakadu National Park, a delightful spot with lots of lush vegetation and crystal clear fresh water. There was a quick trip to Canberra in mid July for a symposium at The Australian National University organised by Douglas Craig there on 'American Studies with an Australian Accent'.

Over a long weekend in late July I led a Historical Society field trip to the Roper River region. My travelling companion was an anthropologist colleague Kate Senior, who had done a lot of research in the area. Thanks to her expertise, the trip was one of the most rewarding in which I was involved. After looking at the historic former Roper Bar Police Station and the nearby monument to the explorer Ludwig Leichhardt, we drove to Rocky Bar, a beautiful spot on the Hodgson River's banks. We set up camp there. We then looked at nearby Aboriginal rock carvings, including of mermaids who had visited

the site. After this we drove for well over an hour along a dusty, narrow and difficult track to reach the rock art and burial site at Mountain Creek Waterhole. Kate had previously obtained permission from the traditional Aboriginal owners for us to be there and without her guidance we would never have found it. Among our group were Mickey Dewar and her husband David Ritchie, the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts, who while working for the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority some years earlier wrote a report on the site. It was an extraordinary place, located in a big cave that a much earlier visitor described as a natural tomb. All the cave walls were covered with paintings in various styles. On the ground there were human bones painted in ochre. On the following day we continued slowly along the dirt Nathan River Road, stopping at the St Vidgeon homestead ruins and the Southern Lost City, a large area of imposing and closely packed rock formations. During the day my vehicle was one of three on the trip to have a flat tyre. I had two spare tyres and wheels with me but hoped I would not have another puncture in such a remote location. We camped the night in another superb location on the banks of a river. Our long journey home of over a thousand kilometres on the last day was via Cape Crawford and Daly Waters.



**Mountain Creek Waterhole site in 2005**

What turned out to be my last semester of undergraduate teaching commenced in late July. Due to Bill Wilson's move to another part of the university, I took over his first year subject on Australian politics. I taught this through a seminar approach with very few formal lectures and it seemed to work well. I also taught my subjects on Europe since 1870 and North Australia since 1911. I had about 55 undergraduates in addition to my dozen postgraduates.

My involvement in the Garma Festival during early August proved memorable. I set off on my journey to northeast Arnhem Land early on the morning of 4 August. With me were Ann McGrath and Sonia Smallacombe. My four-wheel drive vehicle was well loaded with camping gear, food, extra petrol and water. The journey was about a thousand kilometres with over 800 kilometres of dirt road. It took us about 14 hours. We left the Stuart Highway south of Katherine and followed the Central Arnhem Road. Much of the country through which we passed was particularly attractive, with creek and river crossings, mountains and thick forests all appearing along the way. The last part of the drive was difficult as it was in unseasonal heavy rain in the dark. There were huge numbers of cane toads on the road. We eventually arrived at the Festival site of Gulkula, about 40 kilometres from Nhulunbuy, where we set up camp. Gulkula was in a stringy bark forest with views of the Gulf of Carpentaria. The Garma ceremonial ground was the Festival's focus. There were various shelters and a kitchen and dining area. On the following day we met Baiba Berzins, who was a speaker in a session on 'Indigenous Tourism in Australia: Culture and History' that Sonia and I organised. Baiba was well advanced with her book on the history of tourism in the Territory. We also visited Nhulunbuy and the excellent art centre at Yirrkala. After lunch I attended the opening session at which the prominent Yolngu leader Galarwuy Yunupingu presided. Traditional dancing followed it. That evening there was a band concert. Most of the thousand or so attendees camped in tents on the festival site. The rain fortunately stopped but before then the site became unpleasantly muddy. The Garma Forum on Indigenous Cultural Livelihoods started on 6 September. The session for which Sonia and I were responsible seemed to go reasonably. In addition to Baiba, another speaker at it was the historian Kate Darian-Smith from The University of Melbourne, who had her two delightful young daughters with her. Kate unfortunately became very ill, probably due to drinking

contaminated water. Sonia and I took her to Nhulunbuy Hospital where she received expert attention. She subsequently made a steady recovery. I continued attending sessions on the next day, including a really worthwhile one about the Macassans. A delegation of Macassan dancers and musicians was at the festival to commemorate earlier cultural contacts between their ancestors and the Yolngu. On the evening of 8 August there was more dancing and a concert featuring the famous Yothu Yindi band with Mandawuy Yunupingu as lead singer. I met many people at Garma, some of whom I knew and others I did not. There were often long queues for meals but that allowed for wide ranging discussions while waiting for the food. In addition to the forum there were other events such as art, basket weaving and music classes. Our journey home on 9 August was long but uneventful. Ann and Sonia made sure I did not fall asleep at the wheel. I spent a lot of time and had numerous frustrations during the remainder of the year compiling the forum report, of which I was editor in chief. It was finally published just before Christmas.



**Sonia Smallacombe, Ann McGrath and Kate Darian-Smith with Kate's daughters  
at Gulkula in 2005**

I had much to do on returning from Garma. Xavier and Geraldine Pons were in Darwin. I chaired a seminar he gave at the university on Australian historical novels. Before long I was away again, this time to University of the Sunshine Coast at Sippy Downs in Queensland during late August. I spent a couple of days there reviewing the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. At the end of August I chaired a forum at the university in which Tom Frame, a well-known historian and theologian as well being an Anglican bishop, discussed the ethics of Australia's intervention in the Iraq war. A worthwhile experience in early September was giving a lecture about Territory history on board the luxury cruise ship *Orion* while it was docked in Darwin to a group of Americans representing cultural tourism organisations. In mid September I said farewell to Sonia Smallacombe, who was leaving to take up a position with the United Nations in New York. I also at about this time started research for an article on the revived statehood campaign in the Territory. I made a short trip to Alice Springs at the end of the month to take classes with Politics students there. In early October I chaired a forum at the university on living in the Australian community with religious diversity. The History Colloquium in the middle of the month went well. Once again, there were Australian National University participants.

Although I wrote to my parents every week, there are no letters in my father's files from me for the period between mid October and the end of the year. Mum's lung cancer diagnosed in August quickly became much worse and Dad's health also deteriorated. I made a couple of quick visits to see them in September and October. My brother Tom and sister Annie, and their partners Jan Idle and Vittorio Cintio bore much of the burden in looking after them. It was an anxious and distressing time. I continued with the usual teaching, research and other activities in Darwin but with less enthusiasm than normally. I also worked with Bill Wilson on a *Journal of Northern Territory History* article that appeared the following year about the 2005 Northern Territory Legislative Assembly election. Between mid December and mid January I was in Sydney. My mother died on 27 December. Early in the following year I decided that I needed to spend more time in Sydney with my 87-year-old father, who was unable to cope on his own and would have been most unhappy in an aged care facility. Annie, Tom and I made interim arrangements for carers to be with him at home until I could join him there.

Shortly after returning to Darwin in mid January I saw Helen Garnett about my wish to either retire or mainly work from Sydney in a fractional appointment. She could not have been more helpful. We agreed that I would move to a 30 per cent appointment (later to raised to 40 per cent) from 1 March 2006. This would allow me to live in Sydney with my father while continuing postgraduate supervision and research. I would make four weeklong visits to Darwin each year.

Under a previously determined arrangement I acted as Dean of my Faculty until the end of February. My permanent successor Eugene Clark had left after little more than a year and Adrian Walter was appointed to replace him once his study leave finished in early 2004. The Dean's duties kept me busy although I avoided making too many long-term commitments. I also managed, to my great relief, to sell my apartment quickly for a good price. At the end of January Lord Mayor of Darwin Peter Adamson presented me with an Australia Day Certificate of Achievement for my contributions to the Darwin community. The award was most unexpected.



**Peter Adamson and the author at Darwin in 2006**

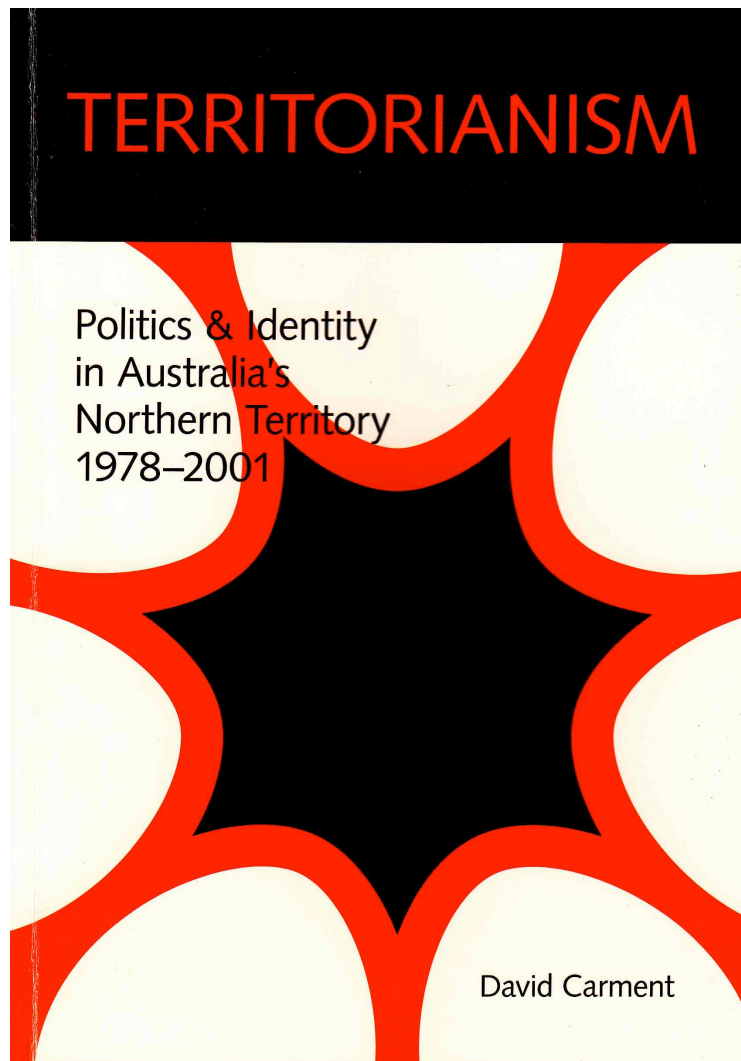
My father flew to Darwin at the beginning of March. I then drove him to Sydney with overnight stops at Katherine, Tennant Creek, Coober Pedy, Peterborough and Nyngan. After settling down in Sydney I established a routine that I maintained for the next couple of years.

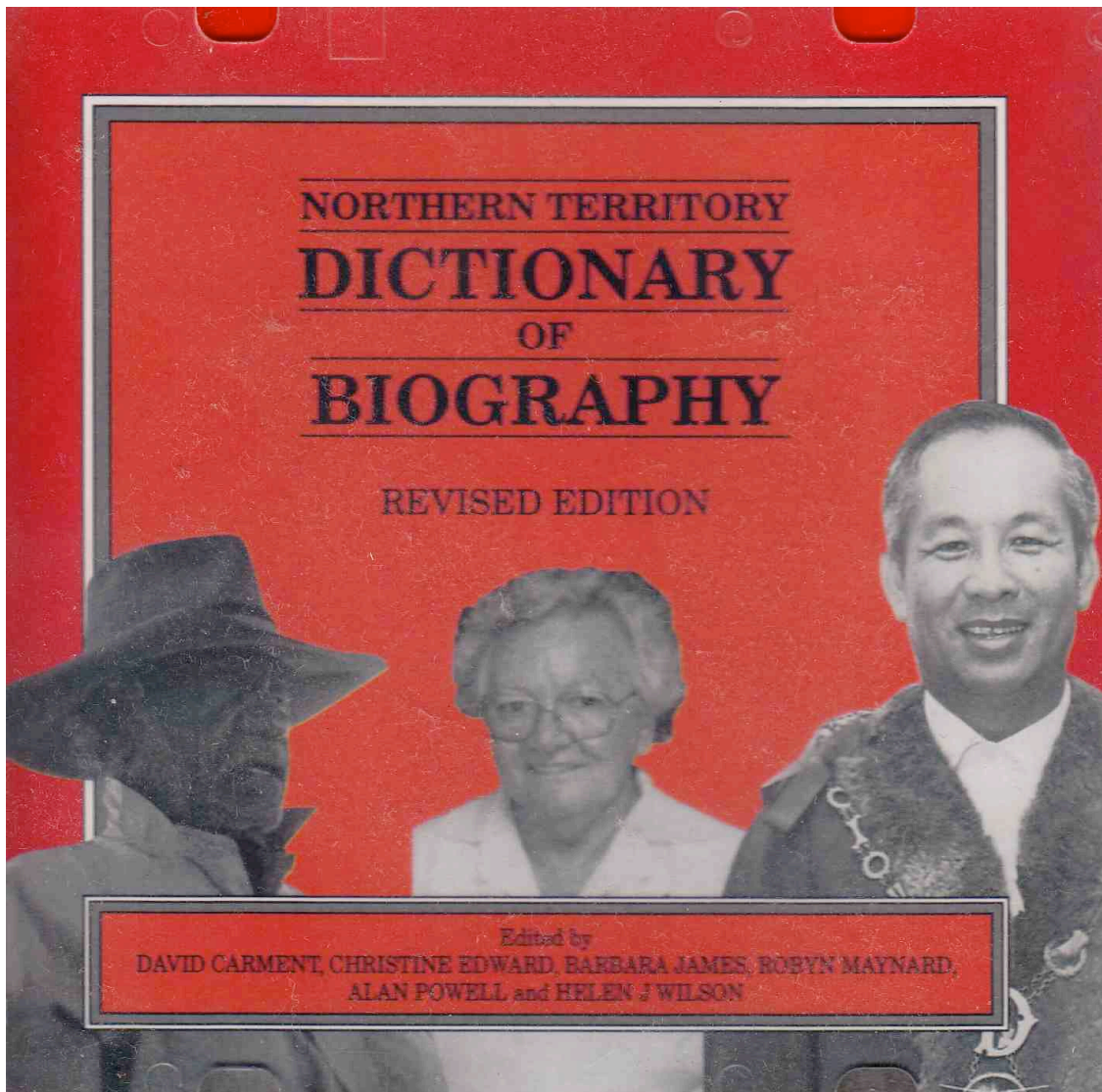
Much of my time was devoted to supervision. I did this mainly by email and telephone calls but ensured that I saw all my postgraduate students during my Darwin visits. Sue Stanton, from a well-known Territory Aboriginal family, in 2007 successfully completed a doctoral thesis on the colonisation and conversion of Coloureds (part-Aboriginal people) at Garden Point Mission. Other successful doctoral students were Jan Whitehead working on Northern Territory housing who finished in 2008, and Ted Ling working on the Commonwealth administration of the Territory pastoral industry, Matthew Stephen on sport and race in the Territory and Wendy Beresford-Maning on some Catholic missionaries in the Territory, who all graduated in 2009.



**Maryann Bin-Sallik (Dean of Indigenous Research and Education), Sue Stanton and the author at a Charles Darwin University graduation ceremony in 2007**

My research and writing mainly focussed the completion of my short book *Territorianism: Politics and Identity in Australia's Northern Territory 1978-2001*, which Australian Scholarly Publishing published in 2007 and a *Journal of Northern Territory History* article on Northern Territory statehood that came out in 2009. I also presented a paper on the latter topic at a university symposium in May 2007. In both I argued that expectations from 2003 onwards that statehood could alleviate the Territory's long-term tensions and that an understanding of the past provided a foundation for statehood were extraordinarily optimistic. With the highly efficient Christine Edward I worked on a revised edition of the *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography* that Charles Darwin University Press published as a single volume in both hard copy and a compact disc in late 2008.





My father died on 3 July 2007. I continued living at his former home, which was left to me under a life tenancy arrangement. After giving the matter a lot of consideration I decided to remain in Sydney. The main reason was a wish to be close to my brother, sister and their families who all lived in the greater Sydney area. I retired from Charles Darwin University in May 2008. Helen Garnett thoughtfully organised a farewell at the university for me attended by various colleagues and friends. I also was made an Emeritus Professor, which meant that I kept an affiliation with the university. At the May graduation ceremony where I was presented with my Emeritus Professor's certificate I gave the address (see Appendix B). In it I emphasised how much I owed to

the university and its predecessor institutions before arguing that heritage and history provided important guideposts for the new graduates.



**Helen Garnett and the author at his Charles Darwin University farewell in 2008 and  
*Northern Territory News*, 24 May 2008**

Since 2008 I have visited the Territory at least once each year. I continue to do some research on Territory history and remain involved in postgraduate supervision at Charles Darwin University. I have participated in History Colloquiums and also in a special 2011 seminar in Darwin that Bob Reece organised to commemorate the centenary of the Commonwealth's takeover of the Northern Territory. Various friends from the Northern Territory and the Territory's extensive diaspora have visited me in Sydney or I have seen them in other parts of Australia. I closely and monitor Territory developments, particularly those concerning History.

As elsewhere in Australia, History faces challenges in the Northern Territory. Prominent among them are the recent destruction of places with historic significance in Darwin, financial problems at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory and the ageing memberships of community organisations. The National Trust has fewer members than it once did and a couple of its branches no longer operate. In spite of such difficulties, for the most part Territory History remains healthy. At Charles Darwin University Christine Doran and Steve Farram teach and research History, with Steve writing about and teaching Territory history and convening the annual History Colloquium. Alan Powell continues as an active researcher. The Pro Vice-Chancellor of the Faculty of Law, Education, Business and Arts until late 2015 Giselle Byrnes is a highly regarded historian. Her historian husband Stephen Hamilton was the university library's Research Archivist. Sue Stanton is an academic staff member at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. Alan Davis, Mickey Dewar and Sam Wells do great work as specialist historians at the Territory Library. Matthew Stephen is the Oral History Manager at the Northern Territory Archives. Until 2015 Brian Reid chaired the Northern Territory Heritage Advisory Council. There is a small but vigorous Professional Historians Association. Its members include productive historians such as Kathy De La Rue and Bev Phelts in Darwin and Megg Kelham in Alice Springs. Although diminished in size, the Territory's National Trust remains active. The Historical Society of the Northern Territory continues to publish books and, with Clayton Fredericksen as editor, *Northern Territory Historical Studies* (formerly the *Journal of Northern Territory History*) as well as organising well attended lectures and field trips. Public historians Peter and Sheila Forrest, Tom Lewis and Pearl Ogden write books aimed at a general readership. There are also outstanding History teachers in schools, the best known of whom is Darwin High School's Judy Boland. Outside the Territory, prominent Australian historians like Regina Ganter, Darrell Lewis and Ann McGrath maintain their interest in its past. Postgraduate students and early career historians such as The Australian National University's Shannyn Palmer and The University of Wollongong's Claire Lowrie bring innovative approaches to Territory history topics.

Many people were and are responsible for this vitality. I like, though, to think that I played a part and that my memoir provides some insights into the journeys involved.

## **APPENDIX A: A SHORT CURRICULUM VITAE**

### **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Born 25 December 1949, Sydney, Australia.

### **ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS**

Bachelor of Arts with First Class Honours in History, The University of New South Wales, 1972.

Doctor of Philosophy in History, The Australian National University, 1975.

### **SOME AWARDS AND HONOURS**

Honorary Life Member, National Trust of Australia (Northern Territory), 1995.

Postgraduate Supervisor of the Year, Northern Territory University Postgraduate Students Association, 1997.

Fellow, Australian College of Education (now Australian College of Educators), 1999.

Northern Territory University 1999 Award for Excellence in Teaching in the Higher Education Sector.

Honorary Life Member, Historical Society of the Northern Territory, 2000.

Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia (AM), 2003.

Fellow, Federation of Australian Historical Societies, 2004.

### **POSITION IN 2015**

Emeritus Professor of History, Charles Darwin University, since 2008.

### **PREVIOUS POSITIONS**

Temporary Senior Tutor and Temporary Lecturer in History, University of Western Australia, 1975-1976.

Lecturer in History, Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education (now Central Queensland University), 1977-1981.

Director, National Trust of Australia (Northern Territory), 1981-1983.

Lecturer and Senior Lecturer in History, Darwin Institute of Technology (until 1984 Darwin Community College), 1983-1985.

Senior Lecturer in History, Darwin Institute of Technology, University College of the Northern Territory and Northern Territory University, 1986-1990.

Associate Professor in History, Northern Territory University, 1991-1995.

Professor of History, Northern Territory University and Charles Darwin University, 1996-2008.

Dean, Faculty of Law, Business and Arts, Northern Territory University and Charles Darwin University, 2001-2004.

### **MAIN TEACHING AREAS**

Australian history and modern European history.

### **SOME POSITIONS HELD IN ORGANISATIONS, BOARDS AND COMMITTEES**

President, Northern Territory Branch, Australian Institute of International Affairs, 1982-1984.

President, Historical Society of the Northern Territory, 1987-1990.

President, National Trust of Australia (Northern Territory), 1991-1993.

Vice-President, Federation of Australian Historical Societies, 1994-2000 and 2009-2012.

Member, Commonwealth Working Party, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, since 1999.

Chair, Northern Territory Library and Information Service's Northern Territory Collection Consultative Committee, 2000-2004.

President, Australian Historical Association, 2002-2004.

President, Royal Australian Historical Society, 2011-2012.

President, Mosman Historical Society, 2010-2013.

Deputy Chair, Professional Historians Association NSW and the ACT, 2013-2014.

President, History Council of New South Wales, since 2015.

Member, editorial boards of numerous journals.

### **EXAMINATION AND SUPERVISION OF HIGHER DEGREE THESES**

Examiner of 53 theses (mainly Doctor of Philosophy) for 20 Australian universities.

Principal supervisor of 16 successful Doctor of Philosophy candidates.

### **CONSULTANCIES, GRANTS AND SPONSORSHIPS**

An author, editor, principal researcher or chief investigator for projects in receipt of more than \$900,000, including four Australian Research Council grants.

Involved in successful negotiations for external funding of commemorative activities, positions, publications, prizes, teaching programs and scholarships.

### **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS**

Full member of professional organisations, including International Council on Monuments and Sites and Professional Historians Association.

### **RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS**

Author and editor of books, book chapters, booklets, occasional papers, journal articles, articles in reference books, commissioned reports, newspaper articles, magazine articles, book reviews, exhibition reviews, scripts, and contributions to web sites on Australian federal political history, Central Queensland history, cultural heritage management, family history, local history, Northern Territory history and politics, and public history. Books include sole authored *A Past Displayed: Public History, Public Memory and Cultural Resource Management in Australia's Northern Territory* (Northern Territory University Press, 2001) and *Territorianism: Politics and Identity in Australia's Northern Territory 1978-2001* (Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2007). Refereed journals in which articles appear include *Australasian Historical Archaeology*, *Australian Historical Studies*, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, *Historic Environment*, *Journal of Australian Studies*, *Journal of Northern Territory History*, *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, *Labour History*, *Public History Review* and *The Public Historian*. General Editor, *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography* (Revised Edition, Charles Darwin University Press, 2008).

### **SOME OTHER ACTIVITIES**

Numerous national and local media interviews.

Numerous public lectures, and national and international conference presentations.

Referee for numerous journals and book publishers.

Organiser of conferences, colloquia, excursions, public lectures, seminars and walks.

**APPENDIX B: GRADUATION ADDRESS MAY 2008**

Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, colleagues, graduates, ladies and gentlemen, I sincerely thank the university for the Emeritus Professorship that I was just awarded and for the invitation to address this ceremony. Both honours mean a great deal to me. During my academic career, I attended more than 30 university graduations, most of which took place in tonight's wonderful setting. I did so in the belief that it was a most important way of acknowledging the graduating students' achievements. I also vividly recall the pleasure of my own graduations at The University of New South Wales in 1972 and The Australian National University in 1975, a pleasure that I shared with family and friends. It never, though, occurred to me that I might be in the position that I am now. My first and most important responsibility this evening is to congratulate the graduates and all who supported them during their studies. They have worked hard in obtaining their awards and I know that in most cases family, friends and lecturers played vital roles in assisting them.

It is especially pleasing for me to be here, as I owe so much to Charles Darwin University and its predecessor institutions. They provided me with a range of intellectually exciting opportunities that I would never have had elsewhere and were located in what I still find, despite having travelled extensively, the most fascinating part of the world. For many years, the Territory's intriguing heritage, history and politics have been the focus of my teaching and research. Another benefit of working at the university is the way in which it encourages its staff to engage with the wider Territory community, allowing me to become actively and enjoyably involved in organisations such as the Historical Society of the Northern Territory and the National Trust. The university, as I remembered when I retired a few weeks ago, has come a long way from the time of my appointment in 1983 to the Darwin Community College, a much smaller institution offering a limited range of programs with sometimes quite basic facilities. My first office was in a converted warehouse in Winnellie where the flimsy internal walls meant that one needed to go to the parking area to have confidential discussions with students and colleagues. Teaching had to stop when Wet Season rains pounded down very noisily on the flat metal roof. Even then, though, the institution provided a vital

educational role in the Northern Territory. As Charles Darwin University still does, it attracted excellent students, well justifying the 'Wisdom in a Warehouse' sign that a colleague had on his office door. Many fine people contributed to the subsequent progress of post-school education in the Territory, often in the face of considerable obstacles. Due to their efforts, the university can face the future with confidence.

It is this connection between the past, present and future that I want to talk about further in broader terms tonight. There is currently much discussion about our country's future and how people with professional and technical qualifications can most effectively contribute to it. The new federal government recently organised its 2020 Summit and announced a major review of how the higher education system ought to best contribute to the nation's development. I support these initiatives but want to suggest that in thinking about their own futures and best using the skills acquired during their studies, tonight's graduates may wish to consider what can be usefully learned from the past, or, as the widely read British magazine *History Today* puts it, how what happened then matters now.

One way of illustrating this is to focus on Australian and Northern Territory environments, both natural and built, with which many of us would be familiar. All have historical antecedents. They often represent widely held ideas and ideals, a phenomenon that is often referred to as our cultural heritage. Individuals and communities frequently attach particular historical meanings to places and landscapes. There is a lot of spirited debate about the use of these.

A matter that generates particular passion is the conservation, control and interpretation of places that are seen as the shared heritage of more than one community or ethnic group, something of special relevance to the Northern Territory with its long history of contacts between Aborigines, Asians and Europeans. The World Heritage listed Uluru in Central Australia, for instance, is a location of special spiritual significance to its traditional owners, the Anangu people, and upon which non-Aboriginal people, who still sometimes call it Ayers Rock, frequently make their own cultural claims. In 1985, Territory Chief Minister Ian Tuxworth unsuccessfully attempted to prevent the national park covering Uluru and nearby Kata Tjuta being returned to its traditional owners by arguing that the park should, as he put it, belong to all Australians.

While many people believe that places such as Uluru and Kata Tjuta are the common heritage of everyone, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people rightly feel that evidence of their heritage has often been wrongly appropriated. Whatever views we might have about such arguments, questions they raise are an important component of our national conversation.

Community awareness of the Northern Territory's history and heritage became increasingly noticeable between the 1950s and the 1980s. It was reflected in the fight to save historic areas and sites such as the precinct of 1930s houses at Darwin's Myilly Point and Alice Springs's Hartley Street School from demolition, the creation of national parks like those at Kakadu and Uluru Kata Tjuta, the rapid growth of community conservation organisations such as environment centres in Alice Springs and Darwin and the Territory's National Trust, the passage of Commonwealth and Northern Territory conservation, heritage, planning and Aboriginal sacred sites legislation, and the establishment of special grants schemes. It is often forgotten that Australia's first legislation to protect cultural heritage was enacted in the Territory in 1955, long before similar legislation was passed in the states. It also, of course, must always be remembered that for many thousands of years before then, the Territory's Aboriginal people maintained, as they do today, powerful cultural associations with the places where they lived.

There are today widely recognised and distinctive notions of Australian and Northern Territory identity closely attuned to the material evidence of the past and possessing a strong sense of place. Australians frequently have very deep attachments to buildings, suburbs, towns and landscapes, the loss of any of which, as happened during Darwin's Cyclone Tracy or with the needless and unfortunate destruction of some of the Territory's Aboriginal sacred sites, can be deeply traumatic.

Throughout the Territory, as in many other areas of Australia and the world, how individuals and communities think about their histories is now reflected in wider strategies concerned with art, education, museums, national parks and tourism that focus on attitudes, memories and imagination endowing the physical forms of the past with meaning. This is a key part of the Territory's economically important tourist industry. A recent Northern Territory Tourist Commission marketing campaign asked potential

visitors to ‘share our story’, highlighting the histories of a range of tourist destinations. The first Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, frequently attempted to develop awareness of local history and heritage to promote a sense of belonging and identity. He established the Northern Territory History Awards and the Northern Territory Heritage Grants program to provide funding for conservation and research. A more recent Chief Minister, Clare Martin, spoke of her commitment to encouraging what she described as ‘a strong sense of history and community development’, focusing on historical themes that she felt were expressed in the Territory’s landscapes such as the struggle to overcome isolation and the important role of the Chinese. At a national level, part of the knowledge base for the recent 2020 Summit was clearly embedded in Australia’s heritage, built, natural and cultural. Our political leaders generally agree that the study of history be compulsory in the proposed national curriculum for schools.

Returning to my earlier comments about the future, I hope I have said enough to illustrate how heritage and history can be of contemporary relevance and significance. I firmly believe that the past provides guideposts to this evening’s graduates in many of the directions they are likely to take. I wish them all the very best as they do so.

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